The Darker Sides of Deku

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	that kept me staring at my screen all night, Tiktok_recommended, BNHA_Incomplete_Fics, I've given my heart and soul for this fic, grey_cosplay's tiktok MHA fic recs, Characters Explores Social Media, Characters Explores Fandom, Ajax waiting for updates 2021, Bonkas Absolute Must Reads, The Eternal Crack Server Fic Rec Collection, Goodsoup1543, Best of MHA, Everything so far, Please how do I add fics to collection??, Fanfics I Wish Were Canon 3000, BEST MHA FICS TO EVER BE MADE 🙏, fics i would download again and again, My Personal Favorites, MHA
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The Darker Sides of Deku

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Summary

It’s easy to forget with his bright smiles and positive personality that Midoriya Izuku isn’t the living embodiment of sunshine.
Or: Moments when class 1-A and company notice that Izuku isn’t quite as pure as they think he is.

Notes

Aizawa finds Midoriya's notebook.

Analysis

Chapter Summary

Aizawa finds Midoriya's hero analysis notebook

Aizawa was surprised that this was the first time he was seeing it. He had certainly heard about it. Bakugou had made fun of his obsessive stalker nature, Uraraka and Iida had mentioned it in passing, and even All Might had spoken about how impressive it was. Midoriya had brought it up shyly like it was embarrassing, but Aizawa had never actually seen it.

Midoriya’s quirk analysis notebook.

It had apparently fallen out of his bag in his haste to get home. Today was one of the rare scattered weekends where Midoriya would get to go home to visit his mother. Since they built the dorms, they were rather careful about watching their students outside of the school. They staggered when different kids were allowed to leave. They had a pro hero escort them out and patrol the area the kid would be. The kid would have to check in with the hero at least twice a day. As far as Aizawa was concerned, they were treating the kids like prisoners, but multiple encounters with the league outside the school seemed to be compelling enough evidence that these protections were necessary.

It was foolish on Midoriya’s part to let an accident like this happen. Now Aizawa would have to wait three days to return the thing to him and, knowing Midoriya, it would be sorely missed. What an idiot. He shouldn’t be so careless with his things.

The notebook wasn’t much to look at.

For something so highly talked about, you’d think the kid would take better care of it. The cover and pages were burned. The entire thing was water damaged and it smelled slightly of sewage. Midoriya had clearly attempted to cover that with some sort of perfume, though, so the end result had it smelling more like peppermint sewage.

Aizawa couldn’t help but roll his eyes when he picked it up. On the cover was the words *Hero Analysis for the Future Vol. 13.* Of course the troublemaker had thirteen of these. He supposed the amount of trivia Midoriya had about heroes at any given moment made more sense now.

With a resigned wariness, Aizawa slipped the notebook into his own bag, content to forget about the wretched thing until Monday.

Boredom was a rare enemy in a hero's life, but when it chose to hunt him down, Aizawa was unfortunately weak against it. One of the reasons he filled his days with hero work and babysitting children was because he needed to keep himself busy. He loved and valued both of his jobs, but he was more than aware of how reckless and exhausting it was. He was always tired and it was noticeable to everyone, enemies and fellow heroes and civilians alike, to the point where he’s long since stopped bothering to try and hide it. He always did his job, and he liked to think that people underestimating him because of the bags under his eyes gave him an upper hand. But regardless, the people in his life refused to let him burn out. So on every other weekend, Hisashi and Recovery Girl forced him to take a few days off.

The first day of his forced weekends were inevitably spent sleeping for twelve hours, or as long as it took for him to feel alive again. The second day was spent feeling bored and anxious and out of his mind.

Aizawa never would admit it out loud, but he tended to be a worrier. He didn’t think it was irrational. Everyone in his life seemed to be in constant peril, and it seemed that every time he took his eyes off them, a new threat would emerge or someone would get hurt. The worry was what he considered the most exhausting thing in his life. He lived a life among pro heroes and children training to be them. Peril was a given part of the job, he knew that when he took it. But he also knew that he worried less when he knew that the people he cared about could take care of themselves. He taught people to take care of themselves. That made it easier.

But the worry never went away.

And when he was left bored on a Sunday with nothing to break him out of his thoughts, the worry was overwhelming.

He tried his best to push it down, to distract himself with other things, but there was only so many entertaining things to do when you had orders to sit at home and rest. He'd tried to go to the gym on one Sunday, tried to go out and just be normal, but found out the hard way that one, a hero can't avoid trouble, and two, you do *not* disobey direct orders from Recovery Girl. He was basically put under house arrest from then on.

To his credit, Aizawa lasted most of the day until he lost the argument he'd been having with himself over reading the notebook. On a day like Friday, invading his student's privacy hadn't even crossed his mind as a possibility. On a Sunday, with his skin itching like it's crawling with ants and the voice at the back of his head insisting that knowing more information about Midoriya would help him teach him better, help him better handle the students stubborn recklessness, that he'd be doing something productive, Aizawa caved. With adrenaline pumping through his veins or the weight of exhaustion on his shoulders, Aizawa would have done better. But with nothing but worry to occupy his busy mind, he became his own worst enemy.

He'd regret it, but he opened Midoriya's dirty notebook.

On the first page was an analysis of Death Arms. Despite the damage, it seemed that Midoriya had gone through the trouble of rewriting the words clearly where they had smudged. The pages weren't stuck together at all, implying that Midoriya had carefully blow dried and separated them. Aizawa silently admonished himself for thinking Midoriya didn't care about the notebook. Obviously the damage wasn't something he intended to happen.

Aizawa flipped through the pages, impressed by the drawings and even more impressed by the surprisingly insightful entries. He laughed out loud when he came across a bit on weaponized sexuality. The page was on Mt. Lady, but he could easily see it applying to Kayama. He could actually hear her making the same arguments in the back of his head. Midoriya's clinically worded sidebar about it being particularly effective against the sexually inexperienced or those who were easily embarrassed was also worth a laugh because the kid was obviously both of those things.

Skipping ahead a bit, he looked for a page on someone he knew.

Midway through, in large letters, was All Might's signature. Aizawa sighed and pinched the bridge of his nose. That explained why the kid kept the notebook instead of copying his notes into a different one. Knowing those two, Midoriya could have gotten All Might to sign the next notebook without hesitation. Midoriya could have gotten All Might to sign everything he owned. But that wouldn't have stopped Midoriya from keeping this thing anyway. As far as he was concerned, everything related to All Might was worth keeping.

The next couple pages were filled with an uncomfortable, borderline stalkerish amount of information about All Might. Some parts seemed to be written in code. Aizawa didn't recognize the code, and that was fairly impressive, because code-breaking was among his Sunday hobbies, in case it became useful at work(it has). Aizawa shrugged, figuring those parts were about All Might's secret. It seemed nice of the kid to go to such lengths to hide All Might's secrets. Though the challenge might well tempt villains to try harder to solve it.

Aizawa quickly moved past that section, having already read a few notes about things he really didn't want to know about his colleague.

The next few pages were on some low time pro-hero fights, strangely not up to standard against the rest of his entries and then an entire section on his observations of people he'd seen during the enrollment test. Uraraka made a up a pretty significant chunk of that section and the boy's admiration for her was pretty obvious. It would have been cute if there hadn't been an entire section about her weaknesses and how to potentially beat her in a fight.

That… was slightly new. Not entirely out of the blue. Every entry had a list of some of the hero's weaknesses and potential downfalls. The villain entrees he had were significantly more focused on fighting them. But that was the thing. This seemed to be the first entry where he turned that thought process was towards someone who would be considered a hero.

It was a practical decision. After all, Midoriya would be fighting his classmates in school and there was a definite moral gray when it came to most pro-heroes. You never know when another hero is going to turn against you. Having their weaknesses thought out was wise for any hero, but reading the notes Midoriya made on damaging his friend's hands made his skin crawl.

Aizawa decided to move on from that section. He could talk to Midoriya about it later. A few pages later he found the section on himself. He smirked a little. He could imagine Midoriya's reaction to finding out he'd read it.

The notes were as detailed as the rest. More so, even. It quite suddenly clicked in Aizawa's head that most of Midoriya's notes were based on brief glimpses of a hero fight, what could be found on the news or the internet. Now that Midoriya could interact with heroes in person…

Well, it seems like All Might wasn't the only person he was obsessively observing after all.

Aizawa's fingers traced the lines of his hero costume. Stared at the detailed drawing of his face and felt… nervous. Nervous wasn't quite the right word for the feeling settling in his gut, but it was close. The more he read the section on himself, the more nervous he became.

Midoriya, it turned out, was more observant than he had ever guessed. It was easy to overlook when the kid blindly rushed into danger without a plan or a second thought, but that wasn't entirely true. Midoriya had a sacrificial streak, but his plans, even if they had a great cost to himself, seemed to work. Oftentimes the only people hurt in his mad plans were him. Sometimes things went wrong, and unpredictable elements threw things into chaos. But the plans themselves weren't entirely bad. Or at very least, they were better than a kid his age should be able to put together, more detailed and thought out than he'd expect of most students. Such a skill should be cultivated.

The pages on his weaknesses did not make him feel better. It was one thing for Midoriya to write similar observations to the ones Aizawa had made on his own about other heroes. It was another thing altogether to see his own weaknesses laid out in ink. It was another thing to find them all to be so scarily accurate.

Some of his weaknesses were obvious. Admittedly, he had never made the connection that he was fighting essentially quirkless before, but it was obvious all the same. Actually, the phrasing made Aizawa wonder about some of the assumptions he had about quirkless people. It was obviously foolish to underestimate them. Especially since, according to Midoriya, his powers would do nothing against them. Most of his fights come down to training and weapons. To make it in a world of heroes and villains, a quirkless person would have to be better at both of those just to survive. He wanted to believe that quirkless people lived outside the hero world, but that would be stupid. Quirkless people were human and part of this hero-based society as much as anyone else. They wouldn't be able to escape it if they tried. It was something he would have to consider more at length later.

The longer-than-it-should-be section about attacking his eyes made him feel nauseous. It wasn't exactly news to him that his eyes were one of his vulnerabilities. The main reason he wore his googles was for protection. Midoriya, in turn, wrote an entire paragraph about his goggles, wondering how fragile they were but concluding that the support department likely made them with a very resilient material. A correct conclusion, though Midoriya wisely noted that attempting to break them, especially if resources were in his favor, was a worthwhile venture anyway, because correct or not, it was still an assumption, and if a hero shouldn't put absolute trust in their equipment, why should a villain?

The thing that concerned him was that once again Midoriya had proven himself capable of making brutal judgement calls if put into a corner. It almost seemed like his first instinct was the quickest most brutal route. Those options were written first before the more carefully thought out plans. It wasn't something he'd expect out of the timid boy. He couldn't fault the logic, sometimes violence was the only answer that stood between you and death, but... the dangerous thing about first instincts is that you often act on them.

Aizawa shook the thought out of his head. Actions speak louder than words, and Midoriya's real-life action spoke of an innate heroic instinct.

That still didn't stop him from frowning as his weakness page continued on. Midoriya noticed how he favored his right arm because of a previous injury. Midoriya made several plans on how to separate him from his capture weapon. Midoriya… Aizawa frowned. Midoriya wrote a psychological breakdown of him.

It wasn't at a professional level, obviously. Aizawa would argue that the section carried heavier notes of cynicism than the rest of his writings… but it was accurate. It was accurate enough that Aizawa was bothered that Midoriya could glean this much information from their brief interactions.

The boy had detected his anxiety, knew he had nightmares, pointed out the symptoms of PTSD he had. Midoriya wrote out what he loved and what his moral values were. Midoriya made bullet points on things that seemed to trigger his anger or irritation and stress and fear. And then Midoriya wrote plans on how to use that. Plans on how to manipulate him or plans on how to fly under Aizawa's radar.

Aizawa found, that at very least, Midoriya clearly didn't know how to actually manipulate people. he had a long way to go before he could just talk his way out of any situation. But

Aizawa knew the kid had charisma and this was a start of something dangerous.

It all seemed dangerous, Aizawa decided.

There was too much information here. Aizawa knew that the journal would only get more detailed and better thought out the deeper he read, because Midoriya had grown significantly as a hero since he first wrote this entry on Aizawa. Aizawa knew that firsthand experience would make a hell of a difference on Midoriya's analytical skills. Which was a problem. Because in the hands of a villain, this notebook was an extremely powerful weapon.

If he had dropped the notebook in the street instead of class, his writing could easily be used to kill every hero in here.

This was bigger than him, he decided.

Aizawa waited as Principal Nedzu flipped silently through the notebook the next morning. He had read through as much as he could stand of the analysis notebook the night before and he felt sure that this was the right decision. Midoriya's ideas were dark but realistically effective. Some of his ideas for villain take-downs were ingenious. His ideas for improving school security were fantastic. But Aizawa kept catching hints of something more dangerous lurking within. Midoriya, in all his reckless, borderline suicidal glory, had an utterly ruthless side.

So Aizawa went to the principal and hoped that this could be settled. Whether for getting Midoriya counselling or establishing better security, Nedzu would have the answers. Finally, the principal gently closed the notebook and smiled at Aizawa. Aizawa felt ice spread through his veins faster than even Todoroki could manage.

Nedzu's eyes were lit with the gleam of a madman. It was a look of hunger, the kind of look the principal only got when he had a plan forming, when he was solving a puzzle or countering a chess move. It was the kind of look he got when there was information he didn't know and someone was keeping it from him. It was a look that said he would do everything it took to win. It was enough to make Aizawa regret even looking at the notebook.

“I’m very glad you brought this to my attention, Aizawa. If you don’t mind, I will be more than happy to return this to young Midoriya. I would like to talk to him anyway. Please send him to my office the next time you see him.”

Aizawa’s gut instinct was screaming at him over how bad this was. He felt like he was feeding Midoriya to a lion. He trusted Nedzu, but he also knew the man was dangerous. If Midoriya’s notebook had gotten his attention enough to put that look in the creature’s eyes…

Aizawa had no idea what would happen.

“Yes, sir,” Aizawa said, keeping his face carefully blank. He didn’t know what was going to happen… but he trusted Nedzu. He had to remind himself of that almost like a mantra. He trusted Nedzu. It would work out.

A few hours later, a pale-looking Midoriya returned from the principal’s office looking as though he was going to puke. Aizawa didn’t entirely blame him.

“Are you okay, Midori-?”

Midoriya bowed and held out a piece of paper, still looking as though he’d just gotten off a bad roller coaster ride. “He told me to give this to you.”

Aizawa took it, figuring it was a pass, and sent Midoriya to his seat. After setting an assignment, Aizawa glanced back at the note. It read:

Aizawa,

On Tuesdays and Thursdays Midoriya Izuku will be excused from History of Heroics to take personal lessons with me on analysis. I’d appreciate if you only talked about this with the relevant teachers. Thank you again for letting me know of his potential!

Principal Nedzu

Suddenly, the sick look on Midoriya’s face made sense. Aizawa felt like he was going to vomit too. This… this was worse than bad. Principal Nedzu had decided to take on Midoriya

as a personal student. That meant Nedzu thought Midoriya had the potential to equal him in intelligence. That meant Nedzu was going to train Midoriya to be more ruthless, to be even more of a manipulative genius.

It meant that Midoriya Izuku, a boy with the power of All Might, was also going to have the intelligence of the super-genius Nedzu.

That meant that Midoriya Izuku had the potential to become completely unstoppable.

Aizawa looked at the student, who at the moment was whispering to his friends. Uraraka gasped and began shaking him back and forth in excitement. Iida was doing his patented hand chopping motions trying to get them back on task. This motion seemed to push Midoriya over the edge and he puked down his front, much to his friends concern and his own embarrassment.

As Aizawa excused him to go to Recovery Girl (again), he tried to convince himself that there was no way that a boy as innocent and clumsy as this could turn to the dark side.

He had too much heroic potential, after all.

That's his Secret

Chapter by serenawitchwriter

Chapter Summary

Mina asks a question. Midoriya gives an unexpected answer.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"Hey, Midoriya, do you ever get angry?" Mina asked one day at the end of class. They were all packing their bags and getting ready to head back to the dorms. Of course, everyone in the immediate area perked up at that. The Alien Queen was known for asking the hard-hitting questions, after all.

"Yeah?" Midoriya said like it was a question.

"Really?" Uraraka said curiously. Naturally, like Mina, She couldn't think of a time of seeing him angry outside of being in immediate danger.

Midoriya looked puzzled. "Yeah?" with even more of an upward inflection. He couldn't seem to understand everyone's slightly baffled looks.

Several questions were asked in unison. "When?" "About what?" "Really?" the classroom got really loud for a moment, which motivated a sleeping Aizawa to throw a chalkboard eraser (pun probably intended) across the room to shut them up. He successfully beamed Kaminari in the back of the head, so everyone decided to take this discussion outside lest they draw Aizawa's dragon-like fire.

Their escape successful, all eyes were quickly turned back towards the green haired boy who seemed to shrink under their attention. Their fairly large group seemed to draw the attention of their other classmates so the group only got bigger. Close to the entire class was around

them now, with the exception of Tokoyami, Kouda, and maybe Hagakure… no, wait, there's the floating uniform.

"Well!?" Mina asked eagerly, as soon as they were out of the classroom. "What do you get angry about?"

She was ready to shake answers out him.

"About a lot of things?" Midoriya said clearly still confused about why he was getting attention about this. "I mean, doesn't everyone get mad? It's not that odd."

"Well, no offense, Midoriya, but with a few exceptions, I don't think I or any of our classmates have seen you actually get angry," Iida said efficiently. The times with Shigaraki went unsaid. The fights with Bakugou seemed more like self-defense than anything else. The same applied to most of their villain fights. But in all other instances, Midoriya seemed to have an endless amount of patience and kindness.

Midoriya laughed a little at that. "Of course you've seen me get angry. How could you not?"

"Name one time you've gotten angry!" Kirishima said with a fond grin. Mina expected Midoriya to stutter to a stop as he couldn't think of anything, as was his adorably nerdy way, but nope.

"Well, I'm almost always angry at Kacchan," Midoriya said without hesitation, and everyone blinked, probably more surprised than they should be. But it was weird, right?

"What the fuck is that supposed to mean!?" an angry and easily recognizable voice shouted. Bakugou pushed to the front of the crowd and grabbed Midoriya by the front of his shirt.

Midoriya tilted his head to the side, face scrunching up slightly. "Kacchan, you can't honestly think I have no reason to be mad at you. You're smarter than that."

Bakugou bared his teeth. “Then why the fuck haven’t you done anything about it, coward?”

In an instant, Midoriya’s analysis mode was switch on. “Well, obviously when we younger I couldn’t actually act on my anger, Kacchan. You would just beat me up me and then make fun of me for getting angry and make fun of me more for my failure to do anything about being angry. Not only would it just make me feel more upset, but it would give you more ammunition to use against me. Despite my reckless tendencies, I’m not actually suicidal.”

Mina found herself frowning. She liked Bakugou to an extent. He was an asshole, but he was so easy to tease, always grumbling and shouting at every little thing. It was like having a bear in the classroom. A really really angry bear. But everyone could tell that he’d been mellowing out for a while. Like, he wasn’t as mean with his shouting as he’d been at the beginning of the year. If he had been worse before coming to high school…

Well, it must have been pretty bad if Midoriya had to repress his feelings to get by, right? Midoriya had come a long way from who he was at the beginning of the year, too. Now he didn’t seem even a little afraid of talking to her or the rest of their classmates(with the exception of Bakugou), but thinking back to that squeaky little scared boy kind of upset her. To push your anger down for the sake of survival kinda went against the reason people got angry in the first place. You get angry because someone’s trying to hurt you, right? You get angry so you can fight. But Midoriya couldn’t do that because he was at risk of blowing up every bone in his body without Recovery Girl there to fix him. That sucked!

But that still didn’t explain why he didn’t show his anger now.

He wasn’t breaking his bones with every use of his quirk anymore. Now he could punch Bakugou to hell and back.

(Well... maybe. Actually, they shouldn’t fight at all. They’re getting so powerful that they might accidentally destroy the school or something. It’s better for everyone if they don’t fight.)

“Besides which,” Midoriya continued, still in analysis mode, “anger is often a weakness in a fight. It shows that you’re letting your emotions get the better of you. It gets in the way of

clear, rational thought. It makes you act much more recklessly, and if your enemy has set up a trap or is trying to manipulate you, you won't be planning far enough ahead to counter their attacks."

The irony of Midoriya "Jumps Off Buildings Screaming" Izuku telling people they need to think their plans through wasn't lost on Mina. It wasn't lost on Midoriya, either, but he usually had at least a little bit of a plan, even if that plan was made up on the spot. More of a plan than Mina had, at least. It was like he was getting all these puzzle pieces and putting them together as he went but the puzzle kept on changing and Mina couldn't even see what the puzzle pieces were ten minutes ago before he'd already moved on to something new. He was super smart, so Mina would trust his 'jumping off buildings' plans because despite how crazy they sounded, they usually worked.

"So what… you just don't let yourself feel anger?" Mina had to ask. Still repressing emotions wasn't healthy. You gotta feel what you're feeling at the moment or else you'll bottle things up until you explode and kill people. She's pretty sure that's why villains did stuff.

"No," Midoriya said. Bakugou had dropped him probably because his wrist got tired of holding Midoriya up. People were heavy. "I just control it. I can't afford to get angry normally, so I use it in a different way."

"A different way?" Todoroki asked, and Mina jumped. Where had he even come from? He had a strange glossy look in his eyes and the smallest of frowns. Very few could read him well enough to know that he was concerned. Mina was one of them, because she's very observant of her classmates(especially the attractive ones, but let's be real, they're all attractive). He was probably upset because he, poor baby, had learned to hide his emotions behind his doll face the hard way and to find out that open-book, a ray of sunshine Midoriya did the same thing was really sad.

"Yeah," Midoriya smiled his shiny perfect smile. "I let my anger fuel my determination."

And everyone flinched.

Everyone knew that Midoriya's determination was infinite. He was like a magician that kept pulling a scarf forever and ever out of his sleeve until you find out that that was just the guy's quirk and he's not a magician at all. He was the dude that just grit his teeth and sat back up

like some kind of zombie even though all his limbs were broken. He didn't go down unless you knocked him out, and even then, he usually woke up ready to fight.

To find out all that was tied to being pissed off... Was Midoriya secretly the Hulk? Was he a Viking berserker of old? How did he fit that infinite amount of anger into his tiny, tiny body?

"What the actual fuck?" Bakugou said, always the one to say the swear they all were thinking. He's reliable like that.

Midoriya just looked at them with his big Midoriya eyes and said an innocent, "What?"

Chapter End Notes

He's always angry.

Midoriya, That's a Naughty Word!

Chapter by serenawitchwriter

Chapter Summary

Let Midoriya say f*ck

“Fuck!” Midoriya said, stubbing his toe. It was amazing that he could break almost every bone in his hand and limbs, and yet this still seemed to hurt more.

Iida gasped at the outburst. He’d never heard- oh dear. This was dangerous uncharted territory...

The rest of the class seemed startled too. Uraraka instantly turned a glare on Bakugou, because she knew who taught him that. Bakugou just raised a blond eyebrow at her but didn’t rise to the bait.

“Midoriya,” Iida blustered, surprised at his friend. “I would have thought you better than this. You know that the f-word is a bad word. It’s incredibly unprofessional and inappropriate. What if a civilian heard you? Your reputation would be destroyed. Has Bakugou really been such a bad influence on you? What would your mother say if she heard you cussing like that?”

“To only cuss if I mean it?” Midoriya said, giving him an odd look.

“What?” Iida blinked, his concerned lecture getting cut off by his surprise.

Abruptly, Bakugou burst out laughing. “Oh my- oh my god, he doesn’t know the Legend!”

Bakugou pointed a mocking finger at Iida and just kept on laughing and laughing. He held his stomach and his cheeks were rosy and he had an actually nice smile on his face.

Needless to say, everyone in the room, with the exception of Midoriya, were terrified. They had never seen Bakugou laugh like this before, and it was almost cute but also definitely a sign of the apocalypse.

“She’s a legend now?” Midoriya asked, eyes wide and excited. Bakugou just laughed harder, looking like he was beginning to struggle to breathe.

“Now, Bakugou,” Iida tried to control the situation. He could tell that Bakugou was laughing specifically at him. “This is hardly appropriate-”

“Midoriya’s mom *invented* swearing, you fuck nugget,” Bakugou cut him off. “The fact that you don’t know that just goes to show how ‘cultured’ your prissy rich kid school really was.”

“Kacchan, don’t call Iida a fuck nugget.”

“Now, I hardly think it polite for you to insult Midoriya’s mother like that,” Iida said sharply.

“No, he’s right,” Midoriya agreed easily. “My mom is very good at swearing.”

“Taught me everything I know,” Bakugou said proudly, drawing concerned looks from the entire class.

“And yet you choose to ignore the most important rule she taught us,” Midoriya said pointedly.

“I swear often because I always mean it, fucking Deku.” Bakugou growled back, but it was a rare, almost playful moment for them. It was almost like Bakugou liked Midoriya’s mom more than he hated Midoriya. That alone made her a terrifying woman.

“What does he mean by that, Deku?” Uraraka asked, eyes narrowed and wary.

Midoriya’s eyes sparkled, and he went into teaching mode.

“The first lesson of swearing is that you do it sparingly. Only swear when you absolutely mean it.” Midoriya spoke as though he was reciting facts out of his analysis notebook. “Because the very purpose of swears is that they’re words you don’t say. If you swear too often, then the words start to lose their power. They become just like any other word. But if you never swear and you only let a cuss loose about something important, then there’s a much bigger impact.”

Most of his classmates shot looks at Bakugou when Midoriya said not to swear too often. Bakugou scowled. “You’re leaving out the most fun part, Shitweed.”

Midoriya rolled his eyes. “There’s more than one lesson, Kacchan.”

“Well, get to the most important one.”

“That *was* the most important one.”

Iida watched with something akin to horror as his classmates casually discussed how to properly cuss. He tried to cut in again. “I hardly think it’s appropriate to swear at all.”

Ashido and several other classmates shushed him. Midoriya and Bakugou ignored him, still caught up in their argument.

“Look, the most important part of swearing is ‘chain’ cussing,” Bakugou said, getting impatient. “It’s when you cuss a lot in quick succession while insulting someone. It involves the most creativity and improvisation skill. Obviously, anyone can drop an F-bomb, but if

you really want to take someone to the bank, chain swearing is the way to go. For example: Deku, you're a-"

And then Bakugou let out the most horrendous paragraph of swearing Iida had ever heard. Worse than anything Iida had ever heard him say before. Iida felt the blood rush to his face and felt a wave of moral outrage. They're supposed to be heroes! They were supposed to set an example! This was hardly the example they wanted to set!

Midoriya grinned back at the delinquent as though he hadn't been told he had various animals in his butt. "That was pretty good, Kacchan," Midoriya said something dangerous glinting in his eyes. "But you're a-" and Midoriya let out a chain of swearing far darker and worse than the last. It had a plot. It had bad puns.

When he finished, Midoriya his eyes still held that bright spark. Bakugou was smiling ferally at him. Iida had to resign himself to the fact that this little fight was going to keep going. He didn't know how to stop them.

"Legend?" Ashido asked.

"Legend." Denki agreed.

The swearing battle went on for the rest of their free period and partially into Present Mic's class. Present Mic had taken one look at the argument and decided to record it rather than teach. Though he did ask them to try to add English swears.

Iida needed an aspirin.

Little Corners

Chapter by serenawitchwriter

Chapter Summary

Shinsou and Midoriya get locked in a closet.

Panic attacks were part of Shinsou's life. He's been having them since the first kid called him a villain all those years ago, and he doubted they were going to stop anytime soon. Usually he only had them at night. A mixture of night terrors and bad thoughts lining up to filling him with the kind of anxiety that closed his lungs and crawled up his skin. It was almost always one thought, screaming over and over again, always trying to provide proof against his stubborn resolve.

What if they're right?

You thought about hurting them. You could have killed them. You want to kill them. You can. At any moment you can. It's not hard. You only have to slip up once, and when you do…

The thoughts fill his head with white noise until it feels like he's the only person in the universe. People surround him, try to talk to him, even touch his arm or his shoulder, but he can't hear them over the white noise. He can't focus with the sharp feeling in his lungs.

So he runs. He always runs.

He was in class for this one. Now that he'd left, it's hard to tell where he was. He just needs to find a small corner to hole up in. He'll let the attack pass and than he can return to life like nothing happened. He sees salvation, a janitor's door, and he doesn't hesitate to go through the door and slam it shut behind him.

“Wait,” a small voice said and Shinsou freezes. There was someone here. Fuck . Shinsou recognized him instantly. It’s Midoriya Izuku, the little green haired boy he fought in the sports festival. The one who somehow broke from his mind control even though nothing and no one broke him free. He just did it on his own, and while Shinsou found that impressive, he also found it terrifying.

The boy had never been much to look at. That was one of the things he’d hated about the boy. He got in riding the coattails of his quirk rather than working at it the way Shinsou had to. It made him sick. Now, Midoriya looked even worse. His eyes were ringed red with tears and he seemed even smaller than usual, like a grade schooler. He was sitting on the floor, his knees drawn up against his chest. and his breathing was uneven.

“The door locks automatically,” the boy said with regret.

Shinsou jolts and this did *not* help the panic attack he was having. He whirled and tried the door knob. Stupid, *stupid* . It was locked. He was trapped with the strange boy he only knew from a fight. *Fuck* .

Shinsou dropped to the floor and just gave up. Let the panic consume him. Self-loathing was a hell of a drug, and it just devoured everything. His brain was screaming insults through static that filled his thoughts and his limbs and everything felt wrong. His heart beat thundered too quickly. *Villain* . He can’t breathe. *Stupid* . He’s cold. *Monster* . He feels like he’s dying. *Then just* ***die*** .

Someone touches him. More firmly than his classmates. It’s grounding somehow, more real. He still feels like his skin is full of buzzing bees. he still has to struggle to force air into his failing lungs. Then a voice is calmly instructing him on how to breathe. Counting, making him slow down. Focus more on the numbers than the bad thoughts. Reality slowly settled in around them.

Shinsou was hit with the typical wave of exhaustion. He knew he couldn’t sleep here, but he was drifting off anyway. Stupid brain. He couldn’t sleep when he wanted to, but the moment he needed to stay awake sleep was knocking him out with a hammer.

He prayed nothing bad would happen.

An hour later, Shinsou woke up and he was still in a closet. Now, he had a bad crick in his neck and a headache. He was still absolutely tired and he knew the door was probably still locked.

He also found Midoriya was also still locked in the room with him. The boy was asleep, like he had been just moments ago, and Shinsou was struck again by just how small the kid was. The boy was curled into a ball as if intentionally making himself smaller, his messy green hair falling in his freckled face. He was disarmingly cute, and Shinsou often wondered how someone so tiny could hold so much power.

He tried to remind himself of the power's weakness. He had wondered while they went through the festival how Midoriya could be arrogant enough to avoid using his quirk. He found out when he watched the boy's fight against Endeavor's son. What kind of power broke the user's bones? Shinsou couldn't really hold Midoriya's lack of control against Midoriya himself. Midoriya, against all odds, seemed to be a decent person. The boy hadn't held Shinsou's quirk against him and even tried to cheer him up after he lost. And Shinsou knew that were he in Midoriya's shoes, he'd definitely hesitate to use and train a quirk that broke his limbs as a side effect.

If anything, Shinsou decided, looking at the tiny form of a sleeping Midoriya, he hated the system more than he hated the boy. It's unfair that someone whose powers are a hazard to everyone around him including himself got into the hero course before Shinsou, someone who had almost obsessive control over his own powers. The system was broken, and it was never going to stop frustrating him.

Midoriya stirred in his sleep, apparently having a nightmare. Shinsou's debate of whether he should wake the kid up was solved when the boy jolted up, looking slightly panicked. Once his eyes landed on Shinsou, he instantly seemed to relax. Shinsou frowned at that.

"Hi, Shinsou," the boy said in a small voice.

Shinsou just stared at him. "How…" Shinsou asked slowly. "How are you relaxed? How do you know I didn't control you?"

Midoriya blinked owlishly at him. “Because it feels completely different. Unless you can order someone to go asleep, then I guess I wouldn’t know the difference.” Midoriya suddenly looked eager. “Can you order someone to go to sleep?”

Shinsou leaned back, unused to anyone looking at him that eagerly. “I don’t know.” He muttered. “I’ve… I’ve never tried.”

Why haven’t I tried that? Shinsou wondered. It was a very good question. One he should have asked before. It was stupid of him to have never tried it. If he knows his quirk so well, why hadn’t he tried it?

Midoriya, for his part, had gone off on a strange muttering rant. Listening in, it sounded like the boy was going through all sorts of uses being able to put people to sleep had. It was kinda creepy.

“Midoriya, what are you doing here?” Shinsou asked, struck by what a weird situation this was.

Midoriya looked up at him with bright innocent eyes and didn’t hesitate to reply. “What do you mean?”

Shinsou stared back, caught in the sparkling green. “Why were you locked in the closet when I got here?”

“Oh…” and the boy’s face fell. There was something uncomfortably familiar in his expression. “Same reason as you, I guess…”

“You were having a panic attack?” Shinsou asked skeptically. From how cheerful the boy always acted, he didn’t seem the type.

“Yeah,” Midoriya nodded, sheepishly.

“Why?” Shinsou asked, and immediately felt like a hypocrite. It wasn’t like he understood why his panic attacks happened. They just cut him down randomly and made everything too much and yeah, maybe they sometimes had triggers, but that didn’t mean he knew *why* they happened.

Midoriya, understandably looked uncomfortable. He went back to hugging his knees and looking as small as possible. “I… well, um… I… uh...”

“You don’t have to answer that,” Shinsou said as the guilt attacked him with a knife.

Midoriya hid his face between his knees for a moment. Shinsou could have sworn he was blushing, but when he looked up again, Midoriya’s eyes were filled with a quiet determination. “I didn’t have the chance to talk to you about it at the Sports Festival,” Midoriya said carefully. “I… uh… I wanted to. After. But then too much time passed and it seemed hollow or like an excuse. I didn’t want you to think I was looking down on you.”

Shinsou met Midoriya’s bright green eyes. It felt strange… for all its intensity, the moment seemed almost... intimate.

“I was bullied, too,” and Midoriya said it as though the words weighed a thousand pounds.

Shinsou stared back, still caught in Midoriya’s gaze. He knew the boy wasn’t lying, but he didn’t know how to respond. So for a long moment, silence just stretched between them.

Midoriya broke it first. “Eh… sorry, I know it’s not the same. No one ever called me a villian for my quirk. I was just a useless Deku. It’s probably not as bad as what you went through. It’s rude of me to assume-”

“Useless?” Shinsou interrupted. Midoriya winced and drew into himself, shoulders haunching near his ears. He nodded earnestly.

Shinsou suddenly felt overwhelmingly stupid. Why hadn't he thought of that? Of course the same assholes who made fun of him for being a villain would make fun of the kid who couldn't use their quirk. Of course Midoriya was bullied. Shinsou was such an asshole! He'd never bothered to think about Midoriya's perspective, he just jumped to conclusions and made assumptions because he saw a powerful quirk. He was almost as bad as those bullies he grew up with. Heck, probably worse, because he knew better.

"Shinsou," Midoriya ordered in a firm voice, "Breathe."

Shinsou hadn't even realized he'd started to hyperventilate. Why was his brain such a piece of shit? Naturally taking a deep breath started a coughing fit because his lungs weren't over his panic attack and his entire chest hurt.

Midoriya had moved into his personal space to rub calming circles on his back. When he could breathe again Shinsou became hyper aware of how close Midoriya was and how personal this all was.

He was also aware of how ill-equipped he was to handle this. People didn't get close to him. People didn't bother understanding him. People didn't help him. They feared him and they ignored him unless he made them pay attention to him.

Midoriya wasn't people. Midoriya seemed to break every rule put in front of him and then some.

So now Shinsou had to deal with… whatever this was. "I'm… uh… sorry?"

Shinsou was pretty sure apologies weren't supposed to be questions.

"There's nothing to apologize for," Midoriya said helpfully. "Like I said, I know the feeling. It's really scary, huh? Makes me wish I was braver."

“That’s absurd,” Shinsou snapped automatically. It was funny how easily the rude things came out. “Are you really so stupid as to think you’re not brave? From what I hear you’re already a legend. A crazy stupid legend. You’ve literally fought against the League of Villains and lived. You fought the Hero Killer Stain. You’re All Might’s protege. I don’t see how a coward could do all that stuff.”

Midoriya turned his face away and scooched away from Shinsou. He drew his knees back up to his chest and Shinsou was beginning to see that it was a defense mechanism. Making yourself small equals less places to hit. That kind of thing wouldn’t work for Shinsou, who’s all limbs, but for the tiny Midoriya it probably did its job.

“I’m always afraid when I’m in those situations,” Midoriya whispered. “But... I mean, it’s stupid...” tears started falling down Midoriya’s cheeks. “But it’s not as scary as… as…”

A little choked up noise escaped his throat, and if it weren’t for the fact that Shinsou was slightly used to people crying in fear around him, he’d be very concerned. Emotions just kept flying all over this stupid closest. Stupid panic attacks just leaving all the feelings right by the surface. Emotions are exhausting.

“Midoriya?” he asked, trying his best to be comforting.

Midoriya let out a tiny sob. “I’m just so scared that I’m gonna wake up one day and this will all have been a dream. That I’ll just go back to being quirkless Deku and I never got to go to UA and I never got to have friends and I never got to save anyone. I’ll just go back to being pathetic and useless and forgotten and weak.”

Shinsou breath caught in his throat. Quirkless? They called him that because he couldn’t use his quirk?

“And if I don’t prove that I belong here, what if they just take it all away? It wouldn’t be the first time I lost everything. Why wouldn’t it happen again? I know better than to hope for things but I really really want this and I know I’m just gonna get hurt in the end but I’ve been so happy and I want to hold on to this happiness for as long as I can before I lose it. Because even if it’s a dream and even if some parts are scary and painful, it’s *so much better* than how things used to be.”

Shinsou followed his instincts and wrapped the green haired boy in a hug. He couldn't begin to think of an appropriate response.

It wasn't really that Shinsou didn't get it. He did. Things were infinitely better at UA than at his old school. Not everyone feared him, and some people even tried to talk to him. He was on the way to living his dream, but that dirty thought of losing it all was always stuck at the back of his head, eating at him like a parasite.

At any moment he could slip up, control someone and make them do something terrible. Heck, someone could blame him for a crime he didn't commit. It wouldn't be the first time. And then people would just go back to pointing their fingers and saying he's a villain until one day he truly broke and became one. He was constantly aware of how easy it would be to turn to the dark side. How easy it would be to hurt people and become the villain everyone says he is.

He hates that he has such obvious potential for evil. He hates that he knows that the darkness is there in him. So he wasn't exactly a wealth of comforting words.

Midoriya let out a little hiccuping laugh. Oh, shit, Shinsou said that all out loud. "Everyone has the potential for evil, Shinsou. God knows I do," -he pulled away to stare at his scarred hand- "My own power can take down buildings if I lose control. If I don't think through where my fist is going, I could easily kill hundreds of people faster than you could take control of anyone. And I've known plenty of people who'd do worse. I've known heroes who've *done* worse."

The way he said that gave Shinsou some questions. It sounded like he spoke from personal experience, and the fact that he said 'heroes' plural was concerning.

"The point is," Midoriya said, forcing a smile onto his lips, "It's not your quirk. It's how you use it."

Shinsou was hit with a strange sense of deja vu.

It was his father. He said it when he was younger before his parents got divorced. It seemed so long ago. His father had been the first one to encourage him to be a hero. His mother never seemed to trust him in the same way, though he would never doubt she loved him.

Midoriya hugged him tighter, and Shinsou realized he was crying. “You’re a good person, Shinsou.” He said. “You’re going to be a fantastic hero.”

And in a few words, something unraveled in Shinsou’s chest. There was just… there was no doubt. Midoriya said it like he could see the future and Shinsou was a hero in it. He had no fear. He had no hesitation. He just believed in him.

Shinsou wasn’t sure he’d ever gotten that before. Not even from his dad.

He gripped Midoriya tighter and just cried until he couldn’t anymore. Midoriya stayed there, solid and warm, hugging him back just as tightly. What must have been a long time passed, but Shinsou didn’t really mind. When they finally let go of each other, it was with a sense of catharsis, a lightness that he hadn’t felt when he entered the dumb maintenance closet.

“Thanks,” he said genuinely. This had been a strange series of events.

Midoriya smiled dewily back. “Thank you, too,” he said sniffing, though Shinsou couldn’t fathom what he’d done to help Midoriya back. “I think I needed that. You think we should check the door again?”

“Why would it suddenly be unlocked?” Shinsou asked eyebrows drawing together.

Midoriya shrugged. “I’m pretty sure the door wouldn’t normally lock automatically like that. That’s dangerous after all. What if a janator got trapped? It’s an electronic lock and it’s tied into the school’s system. That probably means that Principal Nedzu can control it remotely. He probably locked us in together because he thought we could help each other.”

The level of resigned apathy that Midoriya said something that was unimaginably creepy and invasive to Shinsou seemed to say a lot about the hero course. Or just Midoriya.

Sure enough, when Midoriya tried the door, it opened. He smiled a little timidly.

“This was… um.” Midoriya looked like he wanted so say fun or nice, but having panic attacks and crying on each other weren’t either of those things. With luck, they wouldn’t be doing this again.

“Yeah,” Shinsou said simply. It had, however, been intimate, and Shinsou couldn’t walk away from this without thinking of Midoriya as a friend. “I’ll, uh, see you around?”

For a moment, Shinsou wondered if Midoriya would feel the same way. He didn’t doubt for long when Midoriya’s face lit up like the sun. “Yeah! We could eat lunch together or, hang on-” Midoriya reached into his pocket and pulled out his cell phone. “We could text if you want!?”

Shinsou raised an eyebrow. “You had your phone that entire time?”

Midoriya gasped and started flailing and berating himself. “Oh my god! I how could I not have noticed!? We could have gotten out much earlier if I’d just checked my pocket. Why didn’t I check my pocket? Shouldn’t that have been the first thing I check-”

Shinsou laughed. “It’s fine,” he said, surprised at how easy this felt. “I think we both had some stuff on our mind.”

Shinsou took Midoriya’s phone and added his number. “Text me later?”

Midoriya blushed. “Yeah.”

He unleashed that smile on Shinsou again, and Shinsou felt a feeling of warmth spread through him. He had a friend, a real friend. With a cheerful goodbye, Midoriya rushed off to explain his absence to All Might and Shinsou started towards the bathroom to wash his face before returning to his own class.

It wasn't until he glanced in the bathroom mirror a few minutes later, water still dripping of his face that it struck him just how easily Midoriya cut through all his defenses. Yeah, he'd been having a panic attack. Yeah, he was more vulnerable than usual, but in a few short hours Midoriya had obliterated a piece of lifelong cynicism that lived in Shinsou's heart and replaced it with himself. The ease at which Midoriya had just inserted himself into his life and attacked the roots of a few of his biggest problems was startling.

In a few short hours, Midoriya had earned his loyalty like it was nothing.

Shinsou shook his head. Villains didn't stand a chance against that guy.

Tolerance

Chapter by serenawitchwriter

Chapter Summary

Bakugou and Midoriya have a bad day

Chapter Notes

whelp! looks like it's time to earn some of our tags

See the end of the chapter for more notes

If there was one thing Bakugou Katsuki was beginning to hate about his job as a fucking hero in training, it was all the fucking fruit loops that decided it was a good idea to kidnap him. He wasn't even out of high school yet, but here he was, strapped to a table, quirk temporarily disabled. You'd think the fuckers would know by now not to fuck with him, but *nooooo* . They had to be fucking idiots.

To make matters worse, they kidnapped mother fucking Deku too. It was like they had a freaking death wish. Yeah, sure, grab two of the strongest kids in class. That totally isn't going to get you murdered later. Shit, the only thing stopping the fucker from getting murdered now was the fucking anti-quirk serum whatever he injected them with. When it wore off, that dick was fucking dead.

In the meantime, Bakugou would have to deal with Deku's stupid face. If the kid's eyes didn't hold the spark of determination, which apparently is Deku for 'I'm pissed off', Bakugou was pretty sure the dumb kid would be sobbing his eyes out.

Which was obviously the last thing anyone in the room wanted.

The fucking fruit loop was still monologuing.

“Hey, asshole!” Bakugou said losing patience. “Cut to the fucking chase.”

“Aw, yes, of course,” the creepy dude smiled. “There’s that famous temper of yours. It’s not quite so effective as my son’s. You can’t quite pull off the scary eyes, but your attempts are cute.”

“Fuck you and fuck your son!” Bakugou shouted.

“I thought we were getting to the point,” Deku interrupted, shooting him a warning look.

“The point?” the villain asked and laughed. “You don’t honestly think I’m actually going to tell you my plans? That would such an amateur move. I’ve learned that lesson. No, I’d much rather keep you in suspense.”

“THEN WHY THE FUCK WERE YOU MONOLOGUING!?”

“Obviously because he likes to hear himself talk,” Deku replied sharply.

The villain smirked and went and grabbed Deku’s face with his sleazy hand. “You,” he said fondly. “I like you.”

The villain turned toward Bakugou now and also went to touch him, but Bakugou turned his head away and attempted to bite him. Deku took that opportunity to successfully bite the fucker himself, and for a change Bakugou felt proud of his childhood friend. The fruit loop hissed and pulled his hand away, revealing that his blood was a creepy acid green.

“Be that way, then,” the villain said coldly. Then he smiled. “I hear that you children were childhood friends. Let’s play a game.”

The villain moved off out of their line of vision, and when he returned, he had a cart of tools obviously meant for their torture. Some of the tools, Bakugou didn't even recognize. A few were glowing acidic green like the man's blood.

"We're going to test your friendship and heroic mettle. I will torture one of you until you cry out. When you cry out, I will switch to torturing your precious friend. The longer you take to scream, the longer your friend will be safe from me. Doesn't that sound fun?"

"Fuck you!" Bakugou was startled when Deku said the words in unison with him.

The villain grinned evilly. "I think I'll start with you."

He pointed the scalpel at Bakugou.

If there was one thing Bakugou hated about his profession, it was that he had to deal with fucking *torture* . He was fifteen years old (almost sixteen) and yet some sick fuckers thought it was okay to intentionally inflict pain upon him?

Bakugou liked to think he had a pretty high pain tolerance. He was stubborn and calloused and angry enough that he wasn't going to let a guy like this jerk him around. He'd experienced plenty of pain. His own explosions wore at his skin and bones and ears. He worked out and knew what it was like to have every muscle in his body hurt. He could take a punch. He could stand back up after an injury. He knew what it was like to have everyone against him and still come out on top.

As it turns out, he still underestimated what actual torture was like. His stubbornness held out for a while, but most of his instincts were geared towards escaping and retaliating against pain, not actually tolerating it. The ache of muscles and the sting of blisters didn't really stand up to having actual knives stuck in his body.

It felt like hours until he gave in, but really he had no way of knowing. Time seemed to move slower when all you could focus on was the breaking of your fingers' bones and the sting of

cut after cut after cut. His throat made the noise against his will and the villain looked so satisfied. If the freak wasn't going to die before, he definitely was going to die now.

But despite himself, Bakugou felt a wave of relief when the man moved away. He didn't expect it to last long. Knowing Deku, the fucker would be back on him in a heartbeat. Crybaby Deku, the weakling, would barely get a knife in him before screaming and turning the fruit loop back on him. If not for his pain tolerance, then for some petty revenge from their childhood. He could only hope that he didn't go insane by the time the heroes showed up.

Deku was stubborn, but he also cried about literally everything. Asking him not to scream was like asking him not to be a nerd.

…

Except when the villain started his torture session, Deku didn't scream. Instead he stared at the ceiling and pressed his lips into a grim determined line. And Bakugou watched.

In some ways, watching someone get tortured was worse than getting tortured. When you're getting tortured all you have to focus on is pain and escape and fear. When you're watching someone get tortured, you have to see their injuries, you see the captors little smiles. You see muscles tense and twitch and you can imagine the pain. You can watch as skin opens like it's being unzipped under a scalpel. You hear the heavy breathing. You smell the metallic blood and worst of all…

You can think clearly. You can hear all the thoughts screaming at you to do something, to help to fix things and your helplessness feels worse because you have no escape. Torture feels faster when you're not under the knife but it also seems like more is happening. Despite the lingering pain, Bakugou couldn't help but feel more emotional about watching Deku get torn apart… especially because it was Deku.

Bakugou would admit, to no one out loud, that to some extent he did care about Deku. When he was younger he'd sometimes think about the 'what if's' of a villain coming after the wimp. His 'friend' would die instantly, or worse, end up somewhere like this shithole. He'd never imagined far enough ahead to what Deku's mangled corpse would look like, but now… well, now he was getting a good idea of that.

It bothered him more than he'd like to admit.

Deku still hadn't screamed. It'd been a good long while, but Deku's expression hadn't changed. Was… was something wrong with him? Why wasn't he reacting more?

Bakugou was starting to get more scared than he felt actually being tortured. Why hasn't Midoriya screamed yet? His expression has twitched and he's grimaced but his eye-line hasn't moved from the spot he's chosen on the ceiling. The villain was looking more and more excited. He moved on to tools he hadn't used on Bakugou. The villain was smiling like this was his definition of fun. Deku barely flinched.

"Deku," Bakugou said, slightly desperate. "Deku, just cry out. Just scream. Just-just *stop this."*

Deku didn't blink.

It's been too long. It'd been way too long. This needed to stop. Bakugou didn't like Deku on most days, but being a stupid nerdy kid didn't mean his feet and his toes deserved to bend like that or that he could lose that much blood, or that the scent of his burned skin should be in the air.

Deku’s eyes were blank and distant.

“I’ll take the torture,” Bakugou said, almost earnestly. “Just stop. I’ll take it. Deku, I’ll take it.”

Deku didn’t respond.

“Stubborn, aren’t you?” the villain said with glee.

Bakugou didn’t cry. You couldn’t prove that he did and if Deku or the fruit loop said anything, they were lying.

“Just scream, Deku.”

“Please?”

“...Izuku?”

The heroes came far too late, in Bakugou's opinion. The fight with the villain looked far worse than it needed to be and the heroes took too long to cut them free. They took too long to check on Deku's injuries. His friend was covered in red and breathing hard. His fingers looked like there was some sort of puzzle that needed to be solved with his bones under his skin. His feet were twisted in the wrong direction. Everything about him looked wrong. This wasn't Deku. This wasn't the smiling kid who was always chasing after him. It was just wrong.

He was grateful that the heroes had called Recovery Girl. He knew there was only so much she could do, but he trusted her and the thunderous expression he saw cross her face when she saw Midoriya's broken body was a small comfort. Oftentimes he felt alone in his anger, but this was something everyone could be mad about.

He wasn't alone in his anger at all, for a change. Bakugou hadn't seen Aizawa get this pissed since the Kamino Ward incident. All Might couldn't even do anything, and he looked like he was going to burn down everything the villain loved and cared about. Their classmates, who had shown up, because of course they showed up, were an even mixture of crying and pissed. Four Eyes' hands were shaking and his eyes were burning with a fire Bakugou hadn't known him capable of. Round Face was smiling, but it was a creepy sadistic one like she couldn't wait to blast the villain into space. He'd help.

But then everyone else kept insisting he go to sleep and get himself healed. Kirishima was crying all over him. But Bakugou wasn't going anywhere until stupid fucking Deku woke up and proved he was okay.

They got lucky in the healing department, it turned out. Recovery Girl couldn't heal Deku completely without possibly putting him in a coma, but some snowy-haired bastard, who came in with the rest of the pro-heroes, had a solution. He turned out to be the 'son' that the fruit loop had talked about, though Frosty made it perfectly clear that he hated the guy and wasn't literally his son. Fruit loop was just delusional. Big surprise. Anyway, dude had a weird healing crystal that he said was really rare and in short supply. Of course, he'd just give it away to Deku for free because he didn't need it for anything.

When Bakugou said this out loud with all the attitude he could, the bastard with 'scary eyes' said, "I'm not going to let a fifteen-year-old be permanently disabled when I can help. So shut up."

Bakugou did shut up, not because Snow Head told him to, but because the words *permanently disabled* were ringing loudly in his head.

It seemed lucky and a little too convenient that the crystal worked, but Bakugou wasn't complaining. Deku's bones seemed to snap back into the right spots. His skin sewed itself shut and he briefly glowed a pale blue. He did wake up, gasping and staring around like he'd just had a nightmare. He was covered in a ridiculous number of new scars, but he was whole.

He offered a timid smile to all his friends, who instantly swarmed around him and flooded him in their tidal wave of concern. More people were crying now, and it was obnoxious.

"Deku, what the fuck!?" Stupid fucking fat tears were rolling down his own face, but Bakugou would destroy anyone who dared comment on them. "Why didn't you scream? We could have shared the pain! Why didn't you just fucking tap out!?"

Deku looked up at with wide wet eyes. The nerd had already been crying from being surrounded by friends and also probably as a side effect of being tortured for several hours and managing to get away unscathed.

"Huh?" he asked stupidly.

Bakugou grit his teeth. "That bastard would have tortured me if you screamed, but you fucking decided to act like a fucking martyr and did nothing for hours. What's the matter with you!? What if you died, you stupid fuck!?"

The rest of their classmates were wise enough to look away from his now genuine sobbing. Yeah, they better run. Fuckers.

"Oh." Deku had the nerve to look guilty. "I kinda zoned out. I read about a way to meditate so you can dissociate from pain during torture or injury. It's not great in an actual fight, but it's useful when you're getting beat up or immediately after you get an injury. And you know I've always had a really high pain tolerance."

Izuku ended with a little smile. The kind that he forced onto his face when he didn't want to worry anyone. Bakugou just stared at his childhood friend. His mind brought up all these little moments where he'd beaten Deku into the ground and Deku just seemed to go completely limp, not fighting, not doing anything. He had practice doing this. Bakugou had given him that practice.

Bakugou turned his head and puked off the side of his gurney. He, unlike Deku, didn't get a magic healing crystal and was still injured and he had had a really shitty day so fuck anyone who tried to make snide or patronizing comments about it. And fuck Deku!

"We'll talk about this later," Aizawa said to Deku quietly. He seemed just as bothered that Deku needed to know how to dissociate in the first place. But meanwhile, a villain needed to be carted away and Bakugou needed to be taken to a hospital. Deku was being taken too, for obvious reasons, and that meant that the rest of their class would be coming too. Fan-freaking-tastic.

Bakugou fell asleep on the way to the hospital. His last thought as he drifted off was, *At least he's okay...*

Chapter End Notes

what was supposed to be a one line reference became a borderline crossover. can you guess what show i was referencing?

The Hidden Quirk

Chapter by serenawitchwriter

Chapter Summary

Midoriya's secret quirk

Chapter Notes

I was gonna post a different story to transition out of the torture thing more smoothly, but I didn't finish writing it :\
so here's this instead. also expect to see some of the writing of our other writers later this week! get pumped!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Iida Tensei resisted the urge to collapse to the ground and go to sleep. When he took the boy on as an intern, they had told him he was a handful. Literally everyone who had ever had the 'pleasure' of working with Midoriya had told him this. Aizawa, All Might, Gran Torino, even Tenya had all said that he attracted trouble. But had Tensei listened? No. He'd been taken in by those bright green eyes and now he was paying for it.

He could hear the other heroes laughing at him now. He'd been given the Deku experience and he hated it.

"Are you okay?" asked the deceptively cute gremlin. Tenya and the youngest Todoroki, Shouto, stood slightly behind him, having joined his agency for their next internship, too. Walking over were Fourth Kind and his intern Bakugou Katsuki. Everyone looked worse for wear from the villain fight they'd just been through.

Tensei pointed a finger at the green haired monster. "Twenty fights." He said. "In less than two weeks."

Midoriya looked guilty, and Fourth Kind gave him a disapproving look. Tensei ignored it.

"Twenty fights." He repeated. "In less than two weeks. That has to be some kind of record. I don't think that this kind of thing has been recorded for interns, but it should be because you just set the record."

Midoriya bit his lip, looking self conscious but not really sorry. Strictly speaking, Tensei

knew it wasn't really his fault, but there had been a definite spike in criminal activity when Midoriya Izuku came into his life and he was too tired to be mature about this. How the hell did this kid attract so much trouble?

Someone let out a soft gasp and Tensei turned to watch a look of dawning realization spread across Todoroki-kun's face. His dazed mind found it kind of fascinating because the boy showed so little expression most of the time.

"It's a curse," Todoroki said as if he'd just had an unbelievable epiphany. "Just as I am the hand-crusher-" Todoroki shot his hand a betrayed look, "-Midoriya must be the villain magnet."

On a day when he hadn't fought twenty villains in a period of two weeks, Tensei would have found that funny. Right now, he bought it hook line and sinker.

Tenya made a little hum of acknowledgement, as if to say Todoroki might have a point. The Bakugou boy was giving them looks like they were idiots, but from what Tensei knew of him that might have just been his face. Fourth Kind clearly didn't know what was going on, but he crossed his arms over his chest and gave them all disapproving looks. Tensei's tired mind likened him to his dad. He was really too tired.

"I'm not that bad," Midoriya said, huffing a little and shifting uncomfortably.

"I don't know, Midoriya," Tenya said, carefully not trying to offend his friend, while still being his adorable Tenya-self. "The statistics definitely seem to hold. The League of Villains never actively turned their gaze towards UA until the year our class, and to be fair All Might, joined. You seem to be in the limelight of most of their attacks, though. And while I'm grateful, you seemed to find my fight with Stain fairly easily."

"I had a general idea of where Stain likes to fight," Midoriya said defensively.

"But Hosu's a big city, Midoriya," Tenya said. Tensei's stomach did a little flip every time someone brought that fight up. His failure to protect his brother… "You have to admit that it's an awfully big coincidence that you found us."

"And there was that time at the mall." Todoroki said. Tensei didn't know what they were referring to, but he could see Midoriya tense.

"Shigaraki actively sought me out then," the boy muttered, and Tensei felt the blood drain out his face. Shigaraki!? The current leader of the League of Villains? Midoriya had been sought out by *him!?*

"Holy shit," Fourth Kind's intern said. Tensei didn't normally approve of swearing, but he absolutely agreed. "Holy shit." And he too looked like he was have a horrifying epiphany, too. "The Slime Villain." Bakugou stepped towards Midoriya, who flinched. The boy started ticking off fingers on his hand. "The teacher creep-"

“I didn’t have anything to do with-”

“That creep in the park,” Bakugou went on, stepping forward and looming over the green haired boy. “That other creep in the park. That one store robbery. That homeless dude. That creep in the convenience store. That time we almost got mugged-”

“That was partially your fault for antagonizing-” Midoriya’s squeaky voice cut off under the look Bakugou was giving him.

“That one kidnapper, that dude your mom dated, and literally all the fucking hero-villain fights you used to analyze.” Bakugou finished, looking unimaginably angry and frustrated. “Deku, what the fuck is wrong with you!?”

“None of those things were my fault!” Midoriya protested. “And it’s not like I was actively involved in most of them.”

“Twenty fights in two weeks,” Tensei felt the need to remind him. Midoriya was looking very small now, ducking his head and trying to shrink away under their stares.

“Midoriya,” Todoroki said in a disturbingly calm and collected voice. “How many villains would you say you run into in a week on average?”

Midoriya looked at his friend like he was unsure if he was helping him or throwing him under the bus.

“Two?” Midoriya said like it was a question.

“Oh my lord!” Fourth Kind spoke for the first time. His eyes had gone wide and he had one of his hands over his heart.

“Villain fights are really common, right?” Midoriya squeaked, in denial.

“They aren’t that common,” Tenya said with a level of exasperation that could only be achieved from a long friendship with the green-haired boy. Tensei admired his brother for his strength in that moment. “This is… well, it’s statistically improbable to say the least. Are you sure you haven’t been hit with someone’s quirk at some point? There must be some kind of explanation?”

Midoriya’s face suddenly closed off, a look of consideration suddenly on his face. He started biting the skin on his thumb. He mumbled a bit and the most Tensei got was ‘hidden quirk or maybe a side effect’.

After a moment Midoriya looked up and asked, “How many villain encounters is normal for an average citizen in a week?”

Tensei stared as everyone around them shared looks of pity and frustration.

“None,” he said. “Most citizens only encounter villains once or twice in their lives.”

“...oh.”

Tensei finally sunk to the ground, exhaustion winning.

He’d been warned.

He had been warned .

…

He had so much paperwork.

Chapter End Notes

Midoriya's real curse is that he's the main protagonist of a shounen anime

Respect

Chapter Summary

Midoriya teaches Mineta a lesson in respect

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“RESPECT WOMEN MINETA!!!”

YEET’S MINETA INTO THE SUN!!!

Chapter End Notes

I didn't write this chapter, but Happy April Fools!

(If you enjoyed this we may or may not write a part 2 ;33)
-Hope

Body langauge

Chapter by serenawitchwriter

Chapter Summary

Kouda notices things.

Chapter Notes

Long chapter for the long wait.
I love Kouda so much and may have put to much of myself into him, but the world needs more mute characters!

Coming next week: Angst

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The trouble with being non-verbal, Kouda learned young, was that you become easy to overlook. It's not that he's invisible, like Hagakure, he'd always been too big for that. It's just that he fades into the background. He can't actively contribute to a conversation unless others choose to pay attention to him. He could sign all he wanted, but if no one was looking at him, he might as well not be there at all.

And with so many eyes set towards the future, set towards goals and their own problems, very few people actually looked at him.

It was a difficult reality, but one he'd come to accept all the same. It was probably one of the reasons he spent more time with animals than people. Animals had always been easy to communicate with. They didn't need words or loud noises to understand him. They rarely shouted at him or treated him like he was dumb for lacking a basic function most humans have. They just looked at him and in a tilt of the head or the excited patter of feet, he knew what they needed.

A common misconception about his power was that he could 'talk' to animals. That wasn't exactly true. There wasn't some secret silent language that he channeled through telepathy to

understand animals. He was just very good at reading them and they were likewise very good at ‘hearing’ his way of communicating.

It was mostly about body language. Little subtle cues that every animal did to express an emotion or a desire or a fear. They said their feelings more than they said words. It was a relief really, animals were always honest with him. It wasn’t difficult to communicate with them. He just had to express a fear or a need and they would understand. If they liked him or he could give them something they needed they would help him.

Humans were a different beast. See, the trouble with humans is that they were animals too; they were just constantly trying to deny that to themselves. Kouda was very good at reading body language and very good at hearing the subtle things people said without words. He understood people far better than the average person and far better than anyone seemed to think a mute capable of.

His problem really came from the fact that no one else knew how to listen.

Kouda was expressive, in a similar way to how Higakare was expressive. She would always be moving so that her clothes would move with her, she found a way to communicate that was exaggerated and as ‘visible’ as possible. Kouda likewise did his best to speak his emotions loudly and to sign whenever that wasn’t enough.

And, thankfully, people here saw him. UA was great! He was living his dream of becoming a hero and more people were noticing him than ever. His teachers all knew sign and were patient with him. His classmates were kind and eager to learn sign with him, willing to look at him and see what he said without words. No one treated him like he was invalid. they asked for his help, they respected him, and he couldn’t think of a time he was happier in his life!

But that didn’t stop there from being that invisible wall between him and them. People slipped up. Even his friends let him fade into the background and more and more Bakugou’s words, Bakugou’s constant shouts, that his classmates were just extras in his life felt more real.

Kouda knew the boy was insecure. He could read the constant posturing and see the underlying fear in it. Like a cat growling and puffing up its tail to make itself seem bigger

and more intimidating.

But Kouda also knew that even in his own life he wasn't really the main character. He had goals and dreams like everyone else. But he wasn't someone people looked at. He wasn't someone people listened to.

Until Midoriya Izuku noticed him.

Midoriya was a… difficult boy in Kouda's opinion.

His body language was open and loud and almost always honest, even if his words weren't. Kouda found that somewhat refreshing, especially when compared to Todoroki, who was always eerily still and uncommunicative. Kouda sometimes caught glimpses of fear and caution, which made the boy slightly less creepy but still, Todoroki gave very little away.

Midoriya practically shouted everything he was thinking and Kouda liked that about him. He liked that honesty even if it wasn't entirely intentional.

The problem was that a lot of what he was shouting wasn't... good.

The harsh reality was that Midoriya's body language said that he was abused.

Kouda would compare him to a loyal dog. Full of love for their master, desperate to be loved back but one that still got kicked under the table for reasons they didn't understand. They'd keep coming back thinking they did something wrong, rather than their bad owner. Midoriya had that cautious anxiety with new people, that expectation to get hurt any moment, that pure innocent joy at being treated well. He had a lot of love to give and it was tragic that anyone would ever hurt him. It broke Kouda's heart.

But Kouda didn't know what to do about it.

Normally with a dog in this situation, he would talk to them, help them and find them a better home. But humans were different. They just deny and lie and even if the talking part worked, then what? Kouda didn't know if Midoriya's problem was with his parents and if it was it's not like he knew a lot about human orphanages. He could go to an adult, but he was pretty sure Aizawa was able to see the body language Kouda was seeing. Unfortunately, body language wasn't exactly grounds for a full investigation into Midoriya's life.

And if he tried to talk, would he listen?

Humans were always so complicated. He wanted to help. He really did. But what if he wasn't the one to do it? What if this wasn't his place and he just made things worse? What if Midoriya cut him out completely?

What could he do?

"Hey, Kouda," Midoriya said one day. Kouda startled badly. He'd been having a rather deep conversation with a wild hamster and hadn't really been expecting anyone to talk to him. He waved shyly and Midoriya smiled.

"I was wondering if I could ask you some more specific questions about your quirk," Midoriya smiled bashfully.

Kouda blushed back and in a few of the more simple signs he had taught the class said, *I'll try my best, but do you think you will understand much?*

Midoriya grinned and signed, slightly clumsily back, *I work hard to learn. So useful hero work* .

It was clear that he was mostly teaching himself on his own, probably from an online course rather than actually talking and signing with people. His signing was slow and he clearly didn't know the finer points of grammar but it earned him a bright smile from Kouda. It was so nice that he would try.

What do you want to know? And Kouda watched with a smile as Midoriya's eyes tracked his hands with rapt attention. After a moment where the boy was clearly translating in his head, Midoriya verbally asked a question and simultaneously tried to ask it in sign. It was painfully slow and hesitant but Kouda couldn't help the overwhelming wave of fondness he felt for his classmate.

They continued with their slow back and forth for longer than Kouda expected. Occasionally he'd stop Midoriya and correct his signs or when Midoriya simply couldn't understand Kouda would write the words down in Midoriya's notebook. Kouda figured it might be easier for Midoriya if he just wrote all his answers in the notebook but Midoriya was insistent. Kouda was honestly grateful. He'd had problems in the past of people abandoning sign after they'd just started to learn it. Usually, they learned a passable amount but it was always slightly disappointing. Kouda did actually like using sign, and it would be nice to talk to someone fluently who wasn't a teacher.

By the end of the exchange, Kouda couldn't help but get his hopes up that they'd really be friends. From what he'd seen, Midoriya was good to those he cared about. Kouda liked him and the conversation they had was smart and fun. But an insecure part of his brain reminded Kouda that with so many other friends Midoriya wouldn't really need him.

Now that his focus wasn't on the signing, Midoriya was processing what he'd learned about Kouda's powers and was muttering a hundred miles a minute. Kouda shifted a little uncomfortably, as once again he'd became relatively invisible but he understood that Midoriya did this to everyone so he couldn't feel too hurt by it.

When one of Kouda's magpie friends startled Midoriya from his thoughts, the boy looked sheepish. "We should do this again," he said kindly, and Kouda smiled to let him know he'd love that.

Soon it became something of a habit. Kouda was surprised by that, but Midoriya waved it off as if their friendship was the most natural thing in the world. They talked about many things, from quirks to animal care to the class DnD campaign. It was really nice.

It was within two weeks that Kouda decided to put some precaution in place to help protect Midoriya from whoever had been hurting him. He knew it wasn't much. But doing nothing was eating up his insides more than ever.

He asked Midoriya to look after one of his mice friends. In reality, the mouse would be looking after him. Mighty Mouse, as Kouda had nicknamed her, had a strength enhancement quirk too. She used it to be destructive in the past, but since meeting Kouda she'd mellowed out. He was still pretty sure she could and would take on a grown human man. She was fiercely loyal and protective. She'd look after Midoriya and make sure no one hurt him. And she'd call him if Midoriya got in trouble she couldn't handle.

Midoriya and Mighty Mouse took to each other like a house on fire. Kouda could see Mighty Mouse getting very spoiled in the future. Just in case, he reminded both of them that she should get plenty of exercise.

As far as hero work goes, it wasn't much. But it was something.

"Hey, Kouda, would you mind if Todoroki, Uraraka, and Iida joined us for these lessons?" Midoriya asked one day.

Kouda blinked in surprise and then shifted a little uncomfortably. He spotted the low hum of anxiety in the other boy's stance. *Wouldn't it be hard to teach so many at once?* He signed.

Midoriya hummed in consideration. Then eventually nodded in agreement. "That's fair." He said. "I don't think I'm fluent enough to be much help teaching them, either…"

Midoriya trailed off, and Kouda could tell he was shifting through other options. "Well…" he said slowly, following with signs. "Would you maybe want to sit with us during lunch sometime?"

Kouda gaped at him, and Midoriya quickly backtracked. "N-not that you have to! I know you have your own group of friends and it's rude to assume that just because we get along that you'd get along with my friends or that-"

No! No! Kouda signed, motions big and exaggerated and flustered. *I would like that.*

Then he flushed and covered his face with his hands. It was nice that Midoriya was going out of his way like this. Oh god, what if his friends didn't like him!? Todoroki hadn't gotten any more readable, though he smiled more around Midoriya. Iida was so loud and official and he yelled at so many people. What if Kouda messed up and broke a rule and then Iida hated him! Not to mention Uraraka, she was so tough and strong and intimidating, Kouda really didn't want to end up on her bad side.

Would you mind if my friends came too? He asked. It'd be better to have a buffer, right? They'd take the expectation off him.

Midoriya smiled brightly. *The more the merrier,* he signed.

Lunch went better than Kouda could have hoped. Shouji, Hagakure, Sato, and Ojiro already sorta knew Midoriya's friends better than Kouda did, and things never got awkward as there were enough people at the table to keep the conversation going. Midoriya was careful to include everyone, in the conversation, asking Kouda's opinion and translating for him, as well as prodding a mostly silent Todoroki to talk.

Kouda had fun. He enjoyed watching his friends move when they interacted. Midoriya seemed really alive and happy when he was comfortable like this.

Everyone seemed really happy.

"You're really smart, Kouda," Midoriya said casually one day. Kouda had just contributed a note to one of Midoriya's analysis and set him off on a whole muttering tirade. Kouda was beginning to like these moments more because he was getting better at understanding what Midoriya was saying and the boy was cute when he got lost in his thoughts.

Kouda flushed at the compliment. It wasn't a common one he got. He didn't think he was particularly stupid, but no one ever really called him smart. He was average, really. Just another way that he faded into the background. Just average.

Midoriya chuckled at his expression. “I would never have thought of what you pointed out.” He shrugged. “You’re really good at reading people and empathizing. I think that’s pretty amazing.”

Kouda tilted his head a bit at that. Midoriya’s body language said a lot more than his words. He was being self-deprecating like he didn’t think he was empathetic or good at reading people, even though he was. He seemed tired and like there was a lot more bothering him at that moment than how smart Kouda was.

Midoriya, are you okay? Kouda asked. Midoriya blinked in surprise at the question and seemed to draw further into himself. He waved a hand and said everything was fine. Kouda couldn’t help but think he’d ruined something.

He reached out and gently squeezed Midoriya’s shoulder. He wished there was something more he could do to help, but yet again he was left knowing something was wrong but helpless to do anything. Midoriya tensed at his touch and then relaxed into it.

“Thanks, Kouda,” he said offering a small smile instead of his usual blinding one. “I really am okay, though.”

Kouda gave him a piercing look but he let it go. He didn't have enough information to press him on this. He couldn’t risk ending their friendship if his actions wouldn’t help yet. It was like approaching an injured animal, he decided. You have to build up trust before they let you help them.

I can do this, Kouda motivated himself. He would help Midoriya!

“Hey,” Midoriya said nervously another day, 1-A’s new transfer student trailing behind him. The boy got approved to join their class after Mineta mysteriously disappeared. It was cause for concern for the teachers, but Kouda couldn’t say he minded much. All his animals hated Mineta, and that spoke volumes about the kind of person he was. “I wanted to introduce you to someone. I think… I was thinking you might be able to h-help each other…”

Kouda raised an eyebrow and shrugged, gesturing for Midoriya to go on. The purple haired transfer student scowled but politely waited for Midoriya to get past his nervousness.

"R-right," Midoriya said, forcing himself to stand up straight. "Kouda, this is Shinsou Hitoshi, you might remember that I fought with him at the Sports Festival." Kouda nodded. The purple boy seemed tense like he was waiting to be rejected. Midoriya gestured widely at Kouda. "Shinsou, this is Kouda Kouji. If you didn't know, his quirk is animal speak and… he's mute."

Now it was Kouda's turn to wait to be rejected. The boy looked startled but his expression didn't turn mean or pitying so Kouda counted it as a win.

Shinsou's eyes did however narrow at the green haired boy. "Is the only reason you're introducing us because my powers won't work on him?"

Midoriya looked sheepish. "Partially? I also think you learning sign language would be good so you can use talk to people without accidentally giving people commands and so that we can respond back without, you know, getting controlled. Not that I don't trust you, but for partners that might trust you less it might be a good fall back-"

"If they know sign language," Shinsou interrupted, sounding bitter. Kouda was left to be a background character, a mere spectator to their argument.

"Most heroes learn at least some sign for their work! You might not be interacting with fluent people, but it might be easier," Midoriya said quickly. Kouda silently sighed. "I also think you two are somewhat similar. You don't have to be friends if you don't want to be, but it might be nice to give it a try-"

Shinsou crossed his arms over his chest and gave an exaggerated eye roll using his entire head. "You're also eager, I'm sure, to see if we can find a way to get my quirk to work on him."

Midoriya blushed, confirming the statement.

Kouda waved his hand to get the boy's attention and asked what exactly the quirk they were going on about was. He knew it had something to do with mind control but he didn't really know how it worked.

Out of the corner of his eye, Kouda caught Shinshou watching his hands with fascination. It made Kouda feel a little peppier. Midoriya immediately went into a longer than necessary ramble, about Shinsou's quirk and Kouda found it fascinating enough. The most important part of the information was that it took a verbal response to work, a response Kouda couldn't give. It was interesting to think about the fact that his disability made him immune to some quirks. Kouda imagined it worked both ways, though, and figured that it probably made him uniquely vulnerable to other quirks.

Kouda was comfortable enough with Midoriya to ask and was rewarded with another long-winded list of examples of heroes who could use his mutism against him. It was kind of intimidating, actually. Shinsou gave him a surprised look and muttered, "You can follow this?"

Kouda offered him a shy smile.

Eventually, Midoriya realized that he had hijacked the entire conversation. This was supposed to be about Shinsou and Kouda becoming friends! He got extremely flustered at his mistake, but both boys shared fond expressions.

Kouda decided to get his dry erase board out of his backpack so he could communicate more easily. Seeing it, Midoriya took it as a prompt that he should leave, because then he wouldn't be needed as a translator and then he wouldn't accidentally take over the conversation. It lead to a feeling of panic for both boys because that meant they'd be left alone with a relative stranger and Kouda wouldn't know what to say and he needed help. Shinsou apparently was also bad at meeting new people, because his panic seemed quite similar.

Midoriya was insistent, though, bypassing their protests and saying he'd go grab them some snacks or drinks or something. He was gone faster than Kouda could react, and now they were stuck alone with an awkward feeling in the air.

Kouda turned and gave Shinsou a sheepish look. The boy scowled and bit his lip.

"You don't have to be my friend if you don't want to be," he said more sharply. It stung, but the way Shinsou folded his arms across his chest and held himself spoke more of fear and insecurity than actual ill will. "I know Midoriya is trying to push you into this because he thinks it's best, but you have a choice in this. You don't have to do anything you don't want to."

Kouda smiled and wrote on his whiteboard. ' *It's okay, Midoriya wouldn't make me do anything I didn't want'.* He drew a picture of a bunny for good measure.

Shinsou read his message, shifted from foot to foot, and said, "Okay."

A long period of awkward silence followed where neither knew what to say.

'How are you liking class?' Kouda wrote, making obvious small talk but it was better than the uncomfortable silence. Kouda was used to silence, but this one was riddled with tension.

Shinsou raised an eyebrow. "It's been an interesting change of pace. Most of the regular classes are the same, but you guys really go all out with the hero training, don't you? It's more intense than I was expecting."

Kouda nodded. ' *And competitive.* '

Shinsou snorted. "I think that's mostly just because Bakugou ass, but I can see what you mean. It's no wonder the rest of the school is jealous of you all. You guys took most of the spots in the third round of the Sports Festival."

Kouda looked away. He hadn't made it to the third round of the festival at all. It was nice to see all his friends move forward and do their best. It was amazing to see how bright the class

stars shined. But he didn't go beyond like the rest of them. He failed and was left behind to join the class cheerleaders instead. He loved cheering his friends on, but it wasn't really the same as being out there with them.

Shinsou saw his look of discomfort and read it better than most would. "Hey, I'm sure you did fine," he said, wearing the look of someone unused to comforting people. "Your quirk is speaking to animals, right? It's not like there was an abundance of animals on the field, so you were at a natural disadvantage." His tone turned a little more bitter. "This school seems to have a thing for those."

Kouda offered a small smile back, but wrote on his whiteboard, *'That's life'*.

Shinsou read the words and his expression seemed to fall. He looked down and away, understanding their meaning all too well.

Feeling that he'd let the mood fall too much, he quickly wrote something else and embellished it with as many sun rays and exclamation points he could.

' !!!PLUS ULTRA!!! '

That earned him a smile, and talking was a little easier after that. He found under the initial surliness, Shinsou was a genuinely kind and intelligent person. He was a bit like a street cat, slow to trust and quick with his claws, a survivor through and through, but ultimately good.

And cute.

He also found out that Shinsou was really enthusiastic about cats, so they connected about that as well.

When Midoriya came back, he beamed down at them. Yes, Kouda thought, this friendship can work out.

Kouda was walking back to the school from the market. He had a parakeet named Pep on his shoulder that was talking very insistently about how cold it was and he kept telling it they'd get back soon. His arms were laden down with groceries. Sato was going to do some baking, and Kouda was always happy to help him.

"Well, if it isn't the class retard, Kouda!" a familiar voice scoffed from down the street. Kouda tensed and turned to see Kibo Reiza approaching with a gang of boys Kouda didn't know.

Kibo was a bully from Kouda's middle school. The boy had a mutant type quirk that made him dragonlike and let him shoot lasers out of his eyes, but he was anything but cool. Kibo had always made fun of him for his inability to talk. He did that thing where he'd shoot lasers at Kouda's feet and ask "Oh, do you want me to stop? Just say the word." and then keep doing it because Kouda couldn't say anything. He used that same excuse when stealing Kouda's food, or school supplies, or doing any other bullying, really.

For a while, Kouda tried to be the bigger person, but eventually his animal friends got offended on his behalf and attacked the dragon boy. Kouda was pretty sure he's the reason Kibo has a phobia of cats now. It didn't help that when Kibo tried to use his powers on the cats attacking him, Kouda got mad and punched him.

He awkwardly waved because he didn't know what else to do. Kibo didn't know sign, so it wasn't like Kouda could talk back. That was always a frustration of his mutism.

Most of the time he didn't mind his disability. You don't need a voice for most things in your life, despite what some big-mouthed people might tell you. Being mute didn't affect his ability to function in his day-to-day life. Kouda had met people who were deaf or blind or disabled in other ways who had to constantly make adjustments in their lives and figure out creative solutions to problems no one else struggled with. To Kouda, mutism seemed tame in comparison. Sure, he had to use sign and carry around a whiteboard. Sure, he had to work to get people's attention. Sure, he had to be more creative with radio communication(the entire class learned Morse code weeks early because of him). But otherwise, he wasn't really fighting his physical condition to live and act normally.

But in moments when his brain is screaming insults and comebacks, begging to make himself heard and understood… he felt tied down. Stifled.

Weak.

He wanted to be a hero. He needed to be stronger than this.

Abruptly, he turned and kept walking to the school. He would be the bigger person, he decided. He was a hero; he couldn't let petty things like bullies get him down. There are far worse things out there. He had faced some of them! Kibo wouldn't be the first or last person to hold his mutism against him.

Kibo and his friends started throwing rocks at him. "Hey, retard, have you gone deaf, too?"

Kouda's parakeet flew away. *Ignore them.* Kouda forced himself to take slow breaths. The rocks didn't hurt that much. He had thick skin.

"See, just like I told you, boys, a total nobody. Nothing in his head but air. Wouldn't know a punch from a kiss. Makes you wonder how he's even al-"

There was a sudden shrill screech. A mouse flew out of the bushes and jumped unnaturally high, slamming into Kibo's chest and clawing at his tough skin.

"Mighty Mouse!" a voice called right behind. Kouda turned to see Midoriya running out of the school gate dressed in running clothes. Pep flew not far above him and Kouda gave him a grateful look. "I'm sorry," Midoriya said to the bullies after he skidded to a stop, bowing and grabbing Mighty Mouse from Kibo's shirt to prevent further damage. Mighty Mouse struggled in his hands. "I'm so sorry, she's usually so well behaved!"

Kibo scowled and glared at Kouda. "Oh, don't worry, it's not your fault."

Midoriya turned and gasped slightly, “Oh, Kouda!” His eyes seemed to narrow at the small scratches and dirt on Kouda’s cheeks. “What happened? Are you okay? Do you need help? Who-”

“Holy shit! It is you!” another boy in Kibo’s group said. “Deku!?”

Midoriya’s expression changed so quickly from concern to fear that Kouda’s stomach dropped with it. He looked smaller and warier, the way he used to look around Bakugou. A dark look haunted his eyes and Kouda could see the old pain and scars.

“Oh! O-Oshiro-kun.” Midoriya stuttered. His eyes nervously flitted around for an escape route as the dark haired boy with creepily long fingers came forward and wrapped them around Midoriya’s upper arm, trapping him.

“Kibo-kun, this is the quirkless kid I was telling you about, the one that was always trailing after me and Bakugou.” Oshiro said. He seemed to be bragging when he mentioned Bakugou. Midoriya ducked his head and Kouda found himself gently setting the grocery bags on the ground, preparing for a fight.

The boy’s grip turned bruising and Kouda flushed in anger as Midoriya winced. “So how’ve you been, Deku? Haven’t gotten yourself killed yet? Why not? Not tired of be a useless drain on society?”

He spoke quickly, one insult after the other. Kouda looked at the other boys and noticed that no one was looking at him. Once again he had faded into the background, there but easily forgotten. Kouda’s eyes widened at the realization. There were two other boys beside Kibo and Oshiro. A boy covered in brown hair everywhere on his body and a plain looking red head who was taller and meaner looking than Midoriya.

“I-I’ve been fine, Oshiro,” Midoriya said, looking anything but fine. “I-uh-I got into UA-”

Oshiro laughed harshly and Kibo and the others joined him. They acted as though that was the most ridiculous thing they had ever heard. Midoriya looked very small in that moment. Kouda had never really noticed how small his friend was with the boy’s larger-than-life spirit.

Carefully, quietly, Kouda moved behind them and made eye contact with Midoriya.

Midoriya's eyes widened and he instantly caught on.

"As if," Kibo snorted, quick to join in. Kouda silently called them stupid because Midoriya had clearly just walked out the school gates. Midoriya had also very publicly made it to the third round in the Sports Festival.

"I knew you were pathetic," Oshiro sneered, "but I didn't think you were this pathetic. You're lying now, too? Let me guess, you got a hand-picked recommendation from All Might too? What a joke."

Midoriya's hand twitched and Kouda saw that he was subtly signing. *Quirk?*

Kouda signed back, and it was easier because no one was looking at him. *Kibo has laser eyes. Usually only uses one at a time. Leaves him temporarily blind in the eye he uses. I don't know the others.*

Midoriya gave the barest of nods.

"Hey, Kibo? Do you want to see if he still cries when burned?" Oshiro cackled. "He used to make the stupidest little noises."

Kibo and his friends laughed while Kouda started to see red. Midoriya's sharp eyes were the only thing that stopped him from acting. Kibo had moved closer to leer at Midoriya. Midoriya braced his feet apart so he'd be ready to move when the fight started. He still had a hold of Mighty Mouse, whose small red eyes were glaring at the bullies with hatred.

Taking a deep breath, and like Kouda, trying to be the bigger person, trying to give them a chance, Midoriya said, "Please let go of me, Oshiro."

The pained look was gone from his eyes and replaced with the burning determination that Kouda found so intimidating.

Oshiro leaned in further. “Why don’t you make me?”

Midoriya turned his face and met the bully’s eyes. “Okay,” he said, and grabbed one of the fingers wrapped around his arm to bend it backwards with an audible crack.

Several things happened very quickly after that. Taking that as his cue, Kouda grabbed the other two lackeys by the side of their heads and knocked their skulls into each other. They dropped to the ground, unconscious. Mighty Mouse squealed as she jumped from Midoriya’s hand and started attacking Oshiro, who had screamed and was cradling his probably-broken finger. Oshiro did not have the advantage of dragon scales to protect him, so her attack was a lot more effective. Midoriya used his newfound freedom to rush Kibo and slam his elbow into his stomach.

The next moment, Midoriya was ducking and Kouda was moving to catch Kibo in a full nelson, forcing his face upwards so he shot his laser into the sky. A quick jab to the throat from Midoriya abruptly cut off the light show and Kouda dropped the boy as he struggled for breath. Midoriya and Kouda came together and put some distance between themselves and the bullies, but Blood King was already out of the gate, looking ready to yell at them.

Midoriya and Kouda shrank into themselves as one and shared frightened looks. Blood King had been guarding the gate for the afternoon, Kouda remembered. Kouda wondered why he hadn’t stepped in sooner.

Blood King glared down at them and it was then that Kouda realized how this must’ve looked. With slight panic he called Mighty Mouse off and the mouse gave him a surely glare before reluctantly halting her attack and wandering over to stand beside Midoriya’s foot. Oshiro, who was covered in scratches, looked slightly traumatized. Kibo was coughing on the ground. The two other boys were still unconscious.

“Do you have an explanation for yourself?”

Midoriya squeaked and Kouda was silently freaking out. They'd just been in a fight! With civilians! Oh god, they were going to be expelled!

"They- they attacked us!" Oshiro shouted, looking slightly hysterical. He pointed a long finger at Midoriya. "That quirkless freak attacked us!"

Blood King grimaced and looked down at Midoriya. "Midoriya, I was not aware that you were quirkless."

Midoriya looked as though he was choking on air. His eyes were blown wide.

Blood king turned to Kouda, "How did you get those scratches on your cheek?"

Kouda jumped a little but hesitatingly signed, *They threw rocks at me.*

Kibo sat up, rubbing his throat and still wheezing slightly. Kouda had sparred against Midoriya before and knew how strong his friend was even fighting without a quirk, so Kouda didn't envy him.

"Midoriya," Blood King said, turning back to the pale boy. "How did you get those marks on your arm?"

Midoriya seemed surprised to see the red welts mottling his skin. "I-ah… O-Oshiro-kun grabbed me…"

He looked down as if admitting that was shameful, like he was expecting to get scolded. Blood King frowned at the expression but let it go to turn on Oshiro. "That's two cases of physical assault already. Am I right in assuming your hand was hurt when Midoriya broke your grip?"

Oshiro was starting to look a bit nervous, but he nodded.

“And the scratches are from the mouse?”

Mighty Mouse puffed out her chest proudly. Oshiro gave her an apprehensive look before nodding.

Blood King hummed and looked down on Kibo with distaste. “And it was you who I saw use a quirk earlier, wasn’t it?”

Kibo coughed violently but gave a defiant glare. It wasn’t very effective.

“And them?”

Blood King gestured to the unconscious boys. With trembling hands, Kouda admitted to being the one to knock them out.

Blood King nodded and gave them all appraising looks. Then he turned to Kibo and Oshiro and quietly said, “I think you two should take your friends and leave. This will be the only chance I give you, and if I see you again you won’t be so lucky.”

“But they-” Oshiro started, but Blood King cut him off in a loud voice.

“They defended themselves and de-escalated the situation without the use of their quirks. Something that can’t be said about you four. You can either take the opportunity I’m giving you and never do anything like this again, or you can face criminal charges.”

Kibo and Oshiro’s eyes met, and they were quirk to scurry off after that. A knot of tension loosened in Kouda’s chest once they were gone. Just being near his old bully made him feel slightly sick, but he knew they weren’t out of hot water yet.

Kouda glanced shyly up at Blood King, who was shaking his head at the bullies' backs.

"I hate bullies," he said plainly. He turned back to Kouda and Midoriya, whose cheeks were still bloodless from fear and apprehension. "I don't want to see anything like this happen again, but I'll let it slide this once. But you children should understand that even without your quirks, you still have a dangerous advantage as experienced fighters. You could have really hurt those boys if you took things further, and while it's clear to me you both tried to de-escalate the confrontation, there is a camera up there, by the way-" Blood King pointed towards the school gate- "Terrible angle. You still chose to fight rather than seek help, even though I was thirty feet away."

"Sorry, sensei," they said in unison, Kouda in sign.

"Just don't let it happen again."

"Yes, sensei," they said in unison again.

Blood King seemed ready to dismiss them, but stopped when he noted Mighty Mouse still sitting obediently at Midoriya's feet. "Isn't that your mouse, Midoriya? Why is she out here anyway?"

"I was taking her for a run," Midoriya said, eyes regaining some of their light. "My friends like to spoil her so it's important she gets lots of exercise!"

Blood King wore a slightly confused expression, but Kouda nodded. It was good that Midoriya was taking proper care of her.

"Get out of here," Blood King finally dismissed, still looking slightly puzzled. Kouda picked up the groceries and Pep landed on his shoulder, starting to complain about how cold he was again. Midoriya and Mighty Mouse went back on their run because Midoriya was stubborn about his schedule.

It was almost like the fight had never happened.

Almost.

Kouda had been contemplating things since their little fight.

It seemed a little silly in hindsight that his mind had never made the jump to bullying. Midoriya and Bakugou's relationship always had elements of that toxicity, but Kouda didn't really know how to read it because their relationship was so strange. Kouda had always read it more as a bad falling out than actual hatred. They still used childhood nicknames, they still seemed to mimic each others body language and they still always seemed drawn towards each other. They sought each other out even if it was to call the other out. Kouda couldn't exactly call that liking each other, but it wasn't really hatred, either.

Kouda figured it was mostly just confusion. Bakugou didn't know how to healthily acknowledge his feelings, and Midoriya didn't know how to talk about his feelings, so they were both at a stubborn impasse. They didn't know how to communicate with each other even though they seemed to have some innate understanding.

It was a little frustrating as an outsider, because everything about their relationship was obvious except for the reason they started fighting in the first place. It was obvious, but he knew that even if he pointed the truth out, they wouldn't listen to him. They wouldn't listen to anyone.

Moving on from that line of thinking, just about everything else about Midoriya's abused behavior matched the signs of bullying. Heck, some of the signs Kouda *hadn't* attributed to the abuse matched up. Kouda felt kinda stupid for not putting it together.

Even still, it must have been bad. It must have been really bad to put that look of fear in Midoriya's eyes.

Deciding that he could no longer sit around doing nothing, Kouda stood up, got a piece of cake from Sato in the kitchen, and started looking for his friend.

He got friendly ‘hello’s from more of his classmates as he walked. He was retroactively surprised at how popular he’d become. No one had really looked at him like this before. He wondered if Midoriya had anything to do with…

Kouda froze, the realization hitting him like a tidal wave. Then he found himself running down the hall to Midoriya’s room and slamming the door open in an act ruder than anything that could be attributed to him before. Midoriya startled, having been sitting at his desk cooing at Mighty Mouse. Kouda quickly put the piece of cake down and signed accusingly.

You’ve been trying to help me this whole time!

“Um…?” Midoriya said, having only really seen the latter half of that sentence. Kouda huffed and signed it again.

“Well, yeah? Isn’t that what friends are for?” Midoriya said, looking self conscious. “...You seemed lonely...”

Kouda stared at Midoriya for what felt like a long moment. He felt strangely like he’d been manipulated somehow, but Midoriya seemed so genuine and really Kouda was being slightly hypocritical. Kouda had been just as ready to use their friendship as a means to an end while helping Midoriya so he wasn’t exactly being fair when he overreacted like this.

Finally, Kouda said, *I brought you cake.* Midoriya burst out laughing, the intensity of the moment destroyed.

“Thank you.” His friend smiled warmly and Kouda felt any indignation he had melt away. Kouda grabbed Mighty Mouse off the desk and settled onto the bed to cuddle her. “I’m normally supposed to avoid sweets, but I think I’ll have a cheat day.” Midoriya winked and dug in.

Kouda smiled back at him, feeling an overwhelming fondness, but he knew he was letting his reason for coming here get away from him. In his hand, Mighty Mouse basked in all the well-deserved attention she was getting.

Slowly, Kouda looked up at Midoriya and said as clearly and obviously as he could, *Thank you for helping me today.*

Midoriya blinked his big green eyes back at him, "And thank you right back for helping me." Midoriya paused and got a distant look in his eyes. Quieter, he said, "I'm not sure I would have been able to face Oshiro without you there. He'd never been as bad as Kacchan, but… the feeling of his fingers on me… it took me back, you know?"

Kouda nodded. He did know. That moment of suffocating fear, that sense that even though years have passed things haven't changed at all. It was all too familiar.

Biting his lip and wondering if he'd get an answer, Kouda slowly asked, *Midoriya, why do people keep thinking you're quirkless?*

It'd been a question he's been wondering about for a while. First Bakugou at the start of the year, and now this former bully. They didn't say it like they were mocking him for his bad quirk, they seemed to actually believe he was quirkless. It was strange.

Kouda watched as Midoriya tensed. "I-um," he laughed nervously. "I was a late bloomer, really late. We think I didn't manifest a quirk until my body was able to handle the power of it without, you know, exploding, so I only got it about two years ago. U-until then everyone thought I was quirkless."

Suddenly, silence stretched between the two like an insurmountable wall. But Mighty broke it and most of the tension faded with it. They got back into a casual conversation, full of cake and kindness. Something normal.

But even then, Kouda thought… perhaps he didn't have as good of a read on Midoriya's body language as he thought.

Because Midoriya had been lying.

Chapter End Notes

Extra Headcanons and Trivia:
-Blood King was also bullied growing up because blood quirks are creepy and ‘villainous’. I might introduce him to Shinsou at some point, but I have no idea how.
-Midoriya and Kouda don’t understand that walking your mouse outside without a leash is weird or that walking your mouse outside at all is weird.
-Bakugou, upon finding out Midoriya was learning sign, didn’t want to be beaten, so he aggressively taught himself the language too and told no one.
-Midoriya has known for years that a weakness of Oshiro’s long fingers is that his finger bones are thinner and more brittle. It’d been one of his first analyses. But he’d always been too scared to use that knowledge.
-Yes, Mighty Mouse like the old cartoon. I couldn’t resist. I know in the cartoon the character was male but their mouse is indeed a girl.
-The reason I don’t really mention fingerspelling is because, according to wikipedia, fingerspelling isn’t really used as much in Japanese sign language. The have signs that mimic kanji but they don’t really use it the same way ASL uses letters. They only really use fingerspelling in Japan for English adopted words.
-I’m not fully mute, instead I have rather bad apraxia, so if my experience seems inaccurate to your experience being mute I apologize.
-The part where Kouda basically says ‘well at least my disability isn’t as bad as another person's disability’ is something I’ve personally done and seen other disabled people do. If you aren’t disabled please don’t be offended by that. If you are disabled and offended let me know.

Boggarts

Chapter by serenawitchwriter

Chapter Summary

Midnight sees Midoriya's worst fear. It's not what she expects.

Chapter Notes

sorry :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Midnight had had a very long day. The new ‘exam’ for the hero course had involved bringing in two specialists and combining their quirks with her quirk, so she’d been working all day. Basically, Dreammare had the power to make people have their worst nightmare, and Sandman had the power to project people’s dreams into the real world. Naturally, Midnight’s job was to knock the students out so Dreammare could use her quirk on them and wake them up if anything went wrong. Put all together, the plan was to make the students face their worst fear, either so they could overcome it or so they would be aware of it in the future.

Even on the surface, this seemed like a bad plan to Midnight, but the students were going to be heroes and it was better they face their fears in the relative safety of the school than in a back alley against a villians. It was psychologically educational. It helped the students learn about themselves. And besides, the students and their parents signed a waiver.

But it was also, in Midnight’s opinion, a form of torture.

Beyond just overusing her quirk, these tests were mentally and emotionally exhausting. Traumatizing children hadn’t been in her job description. Watching student after student crumble at their own murder or the death of a loved one or the blood covering their own hands because they had killed with their quirk didn’t feel educational to her. Even at 16, the young heroes had incredibly dark and realistic fears.

Not to mention how vulnerable the students were making themselves showing their worst fears to their teacher and two strangers. They had psychologists on standby, Dreammare being one of them, but it never seemed like enough. Already they had to open two cases about abuse, including a precarious investigation against the number one hero Endeavor. Midnight was certain that neither student had wanted such things to come out like this, though at least it meant help would be given. They weren't even halfway through the students who signed up for this 'test' yet.

Even though the point of the test was overcoming fears, very few students ever did.

If anything, the test was more effective at giving Midnight and her two partners new fears. Fear tended to be contagious, and knowing someone's deepest darkness so well was horribly intimate. She'd never been afraid of clowns until she saw how they'd been warped in one of her students' minds. Similarly, Mic's fear of bugs had seemed laughable until she and a student were locked in a room with writhing worms pouring from the walls and squirming around her legs and up to her waist and *inescapable* and just *touching her* while her student screamed. It seemed a little more rational, if just for the tactile element.

And after the tests, Midnight always felt like she had seen something she shouldn't. She was there for the crying and screams, and worse of all, the emptiness. The way some students just froze up and went utterly silent and blank. Like they were so scared that they just completely shut down. Midnight hated seeing people like that. It was bad enough to see villains' victims like that, now she had to make her students go through that kind of fear too?

She knew that it was a 'better now than later' kind of thing, but if there was one thing Midnight knew about hero work, it was that you always kept finding new things to be afraid of.

"Midnight." Dreammare shook her out of her thoughts. Midnight quickly put on a seductive smirk to pretend she was okay. They'd just watched Bakugou suffocate at the hands of the slime villain while blank-faced heroes and strangely, Midoriya, looked on indifferently. It had hit her far harder than she liked. He'd screamed and reached out for help but nobody came. He had a minor panic attack when he woke up, and Midnight sent him to the nurse's office to join Todoroki and honestly too many of his other classmates.

"You don't have to pretend," Dream said, frowning. A side effect of her power was that her face was never quite one you could remember. Not average, per se, more like someone you

passed on the street who seemed familiar but you couldn't quite place.

Midnight considered protesting for a moment, puffing her cheeks out stubbornly, but then she exhaled slowly.

It was hard to keep the 'I'm dangerously sexy' thing up all the time. That wasn't to say she wasn't dangerously sexy. She loved sex and sadism and she had a great body, no one could take that away from her. But as time's gone by, her hero persona has started to feel more and more like a costume. One that she had to perform because it was what was expected of her.

Most of the time it's easy. The character wasn't too different from her, and she loved teasing people, but on days like today, she just couldn't feel it. She could fake it, but it just didn't seem worth it right now.

"Please tell me today is almost over," Midnight said instead, running her hand through her dark hair.

"Almost." Dream shrugged. "According to the list, we only have one left for today. Midoriya Izuku."

Midnight bit her lip. Another hard one. She, like most people, found Midoriya absolutely adorable, but she also knew he attracted trouble like the plague. He always seemed to be in the middle of something, always pushing himself past his limits and nearly dying or killing himself in the process. Aizawa complained (worried) more about him than any other student. That meant either the kid was stupidly fearless, or he had a lot to be afraid of. Midnight had been told about the near miss with disintegration he and Tsuyu had at at the USJ. There was no telling what other scars his nightmare would bring to light.

"Well," Midnight said, giving another long tired sigh, "let's get this over with. Send him in."

Midoriya seemed more timid and nervous than usual. That wasn't really surprising, and showed that he at least had the sense to be nervous about this kind of thing. Bakugou had

come in all brass and confident and ended up worse for it. If Midoriya was already anticipating what was to come, than he was at least a little prepared.

"Okay, Midoriya," Midnight said with a smile that didn't begin to reach her eyes. "Here's how this is going to work. I'm going to put you to sleep over in that cot there." Midnight gesture to the only thing in the room, a cot pushed into the corner. "Dreammare, here, is going to kiss you on the forehead. Like Recovery Girl, her power works through her saliva, but it only takes effect on sleeping people. Her saliva will seep into your skin and cause a violent nightmare tied to your greatest fear. The effects of her quirk will wear off the moment you wake up, so don't worry about that."

Dream gave a small, professional wave and Midoriya looked completely fascinated, probably wanting to ask all the questions he could about the power. Midnight quickly moved on.

"Sandman, here," Midnight gestured to the mute person standing a little further to the side. They were a person made entirely out of sand, wearing nothing but a trench coat and a top hat. They were genderless despite having the word 'man' in their name. "Will sprinkle a little sand on your head, and it'll connect to the rest of the sand in their body. They'll use that to build an illusion of what your dream is. That way Dream and I will be able to see the dream too, and be able to wake you up if anything goes wrong or things get too intense. We are the only three people in the room. The tests are not being recorded, and just as you have signed a waiver, so have we. Everything we see and hear while you're in the dream is confidential."

Midoriya nodded, probably having already read the pamphlet of information the school provided.

"What your job will be is to attempt to overcome the fear, both in the dream and afterwards. It'll be upsetting, but you have to at least try to control your fear. Most people don't overcome them, but how you deal with your fear is important. You'll be required to wear these quirk suppressant cuffs so that if you react violently to the dream, you won't accidentally hurt anyone. Psychological help is available at any time if you need it, even if it's in a couple weeks. After a quick check up with Recovery Girl, you are also required to spend at least a hour in the aftercare room where therapy animals and games and most likely your friends will be waiting."

Midoriya nodded and hesitantly asked, "Are they okay?"

“I’m not at liberty to discuss that, Midoriya. You can ask them yourself when we’re done.” Midnight shuffled Midoriya’s green curls, and he ducked shyly. “Are you ready, kid?”

“As I’ll ever be,” Midoriya said before getting in bed and putting on the represent cuffs. Shifting around until he was comfortable, he gave Midnight a thumbs up and she hit him with the gas. Giving him a few minutes to sink fully into sleep, Midnight and the two other heroes braced themselves.

“Here goes nothing,” Dreammare said, kissing the boy on the forehead. Sandman followed not long after with their magic dust.

Watching this next part was one of Midnight’s favorites. Pulling off their trench coat and hat and handing them over to Dream, Sandman moved into the middle of the room and collapsed into a pile of sand. Then the sand started to glow yellow and the particles spread across the floor and up the walls, many beginning to float lazily into the air. It was absolutely beautiful to watch. Thin wires of light started to connect the grains of sand until the illusion took form around them.

They were standing in a darkened bedroom, obviously Midoriya’s. The room was practically a shrine to All Might. It was clearly pretty late at night, and Midnight would bet that dream Midoriya wasn’t supposed to be up right now.

Dream Midoriya looked to be about five years old, wearing All Might pajamas and being one of the cutest kids Midnight had ever seen. Under different circumstances Midnight would have been squealing with delight, but now all Midnight could do was feel was tense. She hoped it wasn’t abuse. She hoped it wasn’t going to be too bad.

Little Midoriya was peeking through the crack of his bedroom door. The crack was the only thing letting light into the room. Down the hall, Midnight could hear the faint sound of crying. Midoriya could too.

“Not this one,” little Midoriya whispered, apparently a lucid enough dreamer that he knew what was happening. He pulled the door open and walked slowly down the hall. The illusion

moved with him and Midnight held her breath, waiting for the ax to fall. She expected to find his family's bloody corpses or an impossible villain at the end of the hall.

Instead it was just a woman, sitting at a table in the kitchen, a bottle of sake and a small glass in front of her. The bottle was more empty than full and the woman's face was wet with tears.

Midnight recognized her as Midoriya's mother, a fretful but loving woman who was often seen worrying about her only son. Midnight had liked her the few times they had met, and she couldn't blame the woman for worrying so much. Her son gave her plenty of reasons to be worried.

"Mommy?" little Midoriya asked, looking up at his mother. They were the spitting image of each other.

Inko-san jolted and turned to see her son, a look almost like fear on her face. "Izuku, sweetie," she said, voice harried and vulnerable. "What are you doing up?"

"I heard you crying," Midoriya said quietly. "Are you okay, Mommy?"

There was a moment where the woman seemed to be trying to gather her strength, where she tried to pull herself together for her son. But then her face crumbled, and the tears started coming fresh and strong and heavy.

"I can't do this, Izuku." Her voice cracked and broke and she wrapped her arms around her chest as if trying to hug herself. Midoriya rushed forward to hug and comfort his mother. She wrapped her arms around him and just sobbed harder, and for a couple minutes, they just sat there and hugged. Everything was silent save for the soft sobs of his mother.

Midnight exchanged a look with Dreammare, not fully understanding what was happening. The coil of tension in her chest wound tighter.

"I-" Midoriya's mom tried to say again. "I-I can't do this anymore, Izuku."

She pulled back and put her hand against his cheek, looking at him as if he was the most precious thing in the world, while everything else about her was shattered. “I’m sorry, you know I love you, but I can’t- I’m not strong enough.”

Izuku looked up at his mother, eyes suddenly alert. “What do you mean?”

“I..” Midoriya’s mother swallowed and she could no longer meet his eyes. “I don’t think I can take care of you anymore.”

Midnight saw the exact moment Midoriya’s heart broke. “W-what?”

Inko-san tried to wipe the tears off her face. “You’re always getting hurt. And I see the way the other students bully you. I know you haven’t been getting those bruises from roughhousing. I’m just… I wish I could do more for you. I wish I could help you. But I can’t. No one will listen no matter how hard I try. They don’t see how precious you are.”

Midoriya stared at his mother, still not comprehending.

“You- Izuku, you’re the best thing that’s ever happened to me, but I’m not strong enough to raise you. I’m not- I’m not enough, Izuku. I love you, but I’m not enough.”

Midoriya’s mother shook with with fresh sobs, and they sounded painful. Midnight could only look on with horror.

“Y-yes you are,” Midoriya said, seeming to break out of his stupor. “You’re the best mommy ever. You’ve always been the best mommy. There’s no better mommy out there in the whole world.”

“I’m sorry, Izuku,” was all his mother said.

Midoriya's face twisted, as though he still couldn't quite understand what was happening.

"But you are the best. You take care of me and you fix my owies and you listen to me. Mommy, I love you more than anyone! There's no one as strong as you! Not even All Might!"

Inko-san just sobbed harder. A look of guilt crossed Midoriya's face.

"Did… did I do something wrong?" he asked in a small voice.

"No... no, Izuku..."

"Then what's the problem?" he asked, almost frustrated.

"I'm sorry. I'm so sorry."

"Mommy," Izuku said, moving to hug her again. "Mommy, it's going to be okay. We're just gonna go to bed and in the morning everything will be all better."

Inko-san pulled away. "It's not, Izuku." She seemed to take on some resolve. "I think it'll be better if you went to live in a quirkless refuge."

Midnight gasped. Quirkless refuges were essentially orphanages for quirkless children. There was a high population of children abandoned when they were found to be quirkless. Very few of these children ever get adopted. Quirkless refuge houses were supposedly safe houses for those children. The houses were often run by adult quirkless people, who'd been through the system too. They also acted as a safe place for the quirkless homeless population. They were supposed to be safe, but they were often overcrowded and underfunded. Hardly any place a loving parent would send their child.

Izuku stared at his mother and shook his head. "No," he said firmly. "No, I won't go."

“Izuku…”

“No.” Midoriya insisted, crossing his arms across his chest. “I won’t go and you can’t make me.”

“Izuku, it’s what’s best for you,” Inko-san said in a pleading tone. “You’ll be among people like you. No one will look down on-”

“No!” Midoriya said, stubbornly. *“You’re* what’s best for me. I’m staying here!”

“Izuku…” Inko-san’s voice trailed off, and she bowed her head as if she carried the weight of the world on her shoulders. “Izuku, you don’t have a choice.”

Midnight could tell those words hurt the woman to say. They hurt Midoriya more.

“Mommy... no...” the little boy said in a keening voice. Glassy tears spilled down his face, and Midnight had never seen a look like that in her student’s eyes. “Mommy, no. I’ll- I’ll do better. I won’t let Kacchan and the others bully me anymore. I won’t get hurt any more, I promise.”

Inko-san didn’t respond.

“I’ll bring my grades up, I’ll help out more around the house. I’ll- I’ll be the best son you could ever ask for.”

Still silence.

“I’ll-” and Midoriya’s eyebrows drew together as if in pain. “I’ll give up on my dream of being a hero. I won’t- I won’t have to get hurt then. You won’t have to worry.”

Inko-san gasped. “Izuku, no-”

“You’re way more important than those dreams, Mommy.” Izuku pleaded. “I’ll give up anything to stay with you. I’ll do anything.” His voice was choked up with tears, his small hands tugging at his mother’s sweater.

“Izuku, I could never ask you to give up your dreams,” his mother said, and she sounded tired. Just so tired.

“They aren’t worth losing you,” Midoriya said with quiet desperation.

The strength seemed to leave Inko-san, and she finally pulled her son back into a hug. She carded her fingers through his dark hair and looked older than Midnight had ever seen her.

“I love you, Izuku,” Inko-san said softly. “I love you so much.”

“Then don’t do it,” Midoriya keened, crying into her shoulder. “Don’t do it.”

“Shhhhh,” his mother soothed. She started to sing an old lullaby that Midnight didn’t recognize. Slowly the image of the apartment kitchen began to fade as Midoriya went to sleep.

“Please don’t go ...”

When he woke up, they were back in Midoriya's bedroom and everything was quiet. A disturbed look crossed his face and the three heroes watched in silence as he quietly got out of bed and padded barefoot through the dark house, looking in every room to find his mother.

She wasn't there.

He was totally alone.

Midnight woke the boy, a heavy feeling hanging over her. Her face was wet with tears, as was Dreammare's. Sandman had to take some time to reform into their human shape. Midnight didn't bother trying to cover her feelings up. It didn't seem worth it.

Midoriya awoke, looking pale and vulnerable. There were still tears drying on his cheeks. He had apparently been crying in his sleep. It made sense.

"You okay there, kid?" Midnight didn't really know why she asked. A long empty moment stretched between them. Midoriya stared glassy-eyed ahead. His hand rested over his heart like it had been physically wounded.

"She wouldn't do that," Midoriya said with absoluteness. There was no room for argument or question. Midnight was surprised at how cold and empty his voice sounded.

He turned and met her eyes and there was nothing but tempered steel in them. "She would never do that to me."

"Yeah, yeah, okay," Midnight agreed easily. This was the first time anyone had ever reacted like this. He wasn't crying or trying to escape. He wasn't panicking or shattered. He was just eerily still. It was like he felt betrayed that that was his worst nightmare, like he was angry that that was his worst fear.

“You think you’re okay to take your cuffs off?” Midnight asked. Midoriya flexed his fingers and nodded. Midnight helped with that. Dreammare shifted uncomfortably behind them and Sandman finally finished reforming, putting their trenchcoat and hat back on.

“Right,” Midnight said to the very un-Midoriya-like Midoriya. “Well, um, off to Recovery Girl you go. And remember, at least an hour in the aftercare room. I don’t care if you don’t think you need it, you are going in there and hugging those dogs. And if things feel too overwhelming, you *will* go to one of our psychologists and let them help you.”

Midoriya nodded agreeably. He got out of the cot and stretched. “I think I just need to call my mom.”

Dreammare let out a clearly accidental choking sob.

“Right, right, you do that, kiddo,” Midnight patted him on the shoulder, and Midoriya left without any fuss.

Midnight slouched the moment he was out of sight and covered her face as fresh tears came. He- that boy has taken on *titans* . He stared down death countless times, and yet his fear was something so… it was cruel! It was messed up, but it was almost… mundane.

Abandonment seemed like such a simple thing until you *saw* it.

Dreammare slung an arm around Midnight’s shoulder and pulled her into a half hug. Sandman joined them and they just stood there and let the weight of the nightmare thunder through them. They took comfort in each other for that moment, but it eventually passed.

They let go and Midnight wiped the tears off her face. She stretched, trying to loosen the tension still in her shoulders.

Some nightmare, indeed.

Chapter End Notes

The reason Midoriya fears this more than any villain is because abandonment isn’t something he can fight.

Maybe It's a Generational Thing

Chapter by serenawitchwriter

Chapter Summary

Gran Torino doesn’t get young people

Chapter Notes

I'll write a serious depression talk later but I needed to get this out of my system

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The villain made a generic villain speech that Gran Torino couldn't be bothered to listen to. He probably ended with a death threat or something to get Midoriya's attention-grabbing response:

“Jokes on you!” Midoriya shouted. “I’ve wanted to die for years.”

Gran Torino turned to look his student with concern. Midoriya had said that sentence like it was a checkmate, a victory that the villain was ultimately just giving him what he wanted. He didn’t seem to realize that he just admitted to being suicidal. He didn’t seem to be all that concerned about it.

“Same.” said Todoroki and Shinsou in unison. They immediately shared a commiserating look and Gran felt his blood pressure begin to rise. Was… was this some kind of joke, a meme or something?

“Same!” said another classmate, who seemed to be covered in glitter. Ayoma? Anyoma? Gran didn’t know.

Even young Iida took a long considering moment before nodding. “Same.”

Bakugou glared at them. “Fuck you guys, I love life!”

The villain blinked at them, somewhat perturbed that the next generation of heroes seemed to *all* have death wishes. Gran Torino was in reluctant agreement, because that was a rational response. Why did so many of these children want to die?

“Hey,” Eraserhead warned, having clearly dealt with this before. “What did I tell you about scaring normal people?”

“Is he really normal if he’s a villain?” Uraraka asked, subtly putting her vote towards the suicidal group. Eraserhead just gave the tired sigh of someone who didn’t feel it was worth the argument.

“Why do you want to die!?” Gran Torino couldn’t understand it.

A few of the students gave noncommittal shrugs.

“Well,” Midoriya said, always full of answers. “Strictly speaking I have a lifetime of depression to blame, but anyone looking can see that society is going down the crapper.”

“Especially with Endeavor as the number one hero,” Todoroki explained as if they had said this all before. “Our justice system is the most unstable it’s been in years. No one trusts him, and once some key details about him come out, his position as number one will only sew further distrust between the public and the hero system.”

Iida was nodding along and jumped in. “Meanwhile, villains will be more active and cause more chaos than ever. That responsibility falls on our shoulders. Pro-heroes can only do so much, but the inherent weaknesses in the system will become more and more evident in the years to come, and there’s a strong possibility that in the near future this distrust and instability will result in widespread riots if not outright war.”

“Not to mention the inflation that’s coming our way.” Uraraka chirped. “The financial pressure that’s being put on the government from villain damage has been steadily rising taxes and creating a huge disparity between the lower and upper class. We hardly have a middle class anymore. And since the law prohibits casual quirk use, people can’t help relieve some of the financial pressure or fix damages with their powers. A market crash is coming.”

“On top of that, quirk discrimination is more prevalent than ever,” Shinsou contributed bitterly. “That feeds directly into the criminal system. People who can’t get jobs or who can’t live normal lives because of their quirks are alienated by society. Our law doesn’t protect them, and as a result, most decide to live outside the law, to find their protection in gangs or villain support or vigilantism. The League of Villains offers more protection to society’s outsiders than the government does. And the black and white heroes versus villains propaganda only escalates our society’s racism. It leaves no room for people in the moral grey. It simplifies things to the point of dehumanizing a large portion of our population.”

Yaoyorozu nodded in agreement. “Our law system as it stands is insufficient and outdated. Laws that were made for a quirkless world haven't been adjusted for societal changes, even though it’s been nearly two hundred years. The focus on quirk regulation and the militarization of heroics has let structural systems such as finances and civil law fall into horrendous disrepair. If these systems were properly functioning, you’d see a tremendous reduction of crime, seeing as many crimes are petty court cases met with indifference that escalated to violence. An argument about custody, a financial disagreement, a claim of discrimination; all issues that could be handled with proper infrastructure.”

“Despite what the media wants us to believe,” Midoriya said, bringing attention back to center stage, “our futures aren’t particularly bright. By entering the hero system, we have simultaneously taken on a huge responsibility and painted giant targets on our backs. We are just as readily political scapegoats as we are the people who save lives. We are the acting military and as such we are given privileges that put us outside the law and outside of normal citizenship. We have the power and training to kill and get away with it. That is an incredibly dangerous thing that makes us very susceptible to corruption and very easy to fear. The villains, the downtrodden, and the poor will eventually turn against us if things don’t improve, merely continuing the endless cycle.”

Gran Torino felt like a spluttering mess. He wasn’t expecting such a thought-out response. He could admit the world was going down the crapper. The world was always going down the crapper. But to see these bright eyed enthusiastic teens casually speak with such cynicism...

“Well, why don’t you do anything about it!?

“We plan to!” the entire class responded in eerie unison.

Gran was too old for this. These children were the future, not him. This was too tiring, too much work. He rubbed his temples. “But that still doesn’t explain why you all want to die?”

“Well, it would certainly be easier than cleaning up this mess,” Iida said with a chuckle. Many of his classmates grinned and laughed along. Gran Torino felt like he was having an aneurysm.

The sparkly kid, Aoyama? Walked over and patted him on his shoulder. “If it makes you feel better, signing up to be a pro-hero was essentially suicide anyway.” He wore such a warm smile. “If we don’t achieve some level of apathy or acceptance about our near imminent deaths, there’s nothing to stand between us and constant existential horror.”

He was too old for this. He was *way* too old for this .

“Why do I even hang out with you freaks?” Bakugou grumbled, looking more irritated than disturbed.

“Villain’s bagged,” Aizawa said, apparently having taken their distraction as an opportunity to grab the villain with his capture gear and force him into submission.

“Eraserhead, what have you been teaching these kids?” Gran Torino asked snappishly.

Aizawa raised an eyebrow. “That political stuff? Don’t look at me, they figured it out on their own.”

“Deku was the one who originally brought up the subject,” Uraraka said, giving credit where it was due. “He was right, politics are an important thing to think about when training to be a

pro hero."

"We'd all noticed injustice in the world," Todoroki said lucidly, "but putting our heads together and actually examining it hadn't really happened before."

"It's nice to have a game plan moving forward." Iida gave Midoriya a proud look. "We may have argued initially, but political awareness can only mean that we're more prepared for what's to come."

Shinsou slapped his friend on the back and grinned. "And more prepared to change things." Midoriya blushed at all the attention.

Gran Torino just shook his head. To him, it just seemed like depression was contagious. Jesus Christ, these kids were the future.

He looked at Midoriya, who just offered him a sparkling, self-deprecating smile.

He was definitely too old for this.

Chapter End Notes

ah, to be young and cynical

Eyeliner

Chapter by orphan_account, serenawitchwriter

Chapter Summary

Aesthetics

Chapter Notes

Hooray! other writers. send all your love for this one at newprussia.

Izuku Midoriya was a lot of things. He's self-sacrificing, determined, shy, soft-spoken, talkative, analytical, and so many more adjectives. But one thing that no one thought Midoriya could be was goth. Specifically, emo goth. Not the entire class knew, and it wasn't a spontaneous discovery. Only two had this sacred knowledge. Yuuga Aoyama and Fumikage Tokoyami. Yuuga was the first one to find out, of course.

It was a lazy Saturday evening in the dorms of Class 1-A, and one of the rare times that they didn't have any homework due within the next month. Yuuga Aoyama was looking for one of his bottles of liquid eyeliner and he wasn't ready to ask Bakugou if he had it, so he does the next best thing.

Ask the person who's known Bakugou the longest to ask him instead.

Since Aoyama and Midoriya literally lived on the same floor, along with Tokoyami and the grape stain, he hoped that the green-haired sunshine child of Class 1-A wasn't too busy with a future project or analyzing heroes.

Aoyama knocked on Midoriya's door, waiting for a response from the shorter male. He heard something like muffled punk music, but put it off as Jirou blasting her music from a few floors above. When he didn't hear a reply, he opened the door.

"Mon amie, Midoriya? Do you think you can ask Ba-!" Aoyama stopped. If he were anyone else, he would have left.

Midoriya, staring frozen at Aoyama who was in his doorway, was holding a handheld mirror in one hand and an eyeshadow brush in the other, sitting on his bed in the blackest, gothest outfit Aoyama had ever seen, and blasting Call of the Wild at a reasonably loud volume.

"A-Aoyama! I-It's not what you think it is!" Midoriya exclaimed. He quickly dropped what he was holding, raced towards Aoyama, pulled him into the room, and slammed his door shut, all in the span of a few seconds. Yuuga sat down on the floor in shock because: 1. Midoriya Izuku was an emo goth and 2. There was someone else like him.

"Midoriya. Why didn't you tell anyone that you were goth?" Aoyama hesitantly asked. The green haired, now black haired, hero in training sighed.

"I-I didn't think anyone would really accept me like this." He said, gesturing to himself. "L-Like, I know you all are fine with being friends a-and all that, b-but I-uh I thought that you would all….. Change your minds once you knew the truth."

Midoriya slouched. "I found the goth culture because I was being bullied and needed somewhere to really express my stress and self-loathing. I made a few goth friends online and met up with them a few times. They're like me, but they don't care about what society says and told me that I should do the same. I guess now, I've started to accept their advice. After all, we're all going to hell in the end anyway." He offered a little joking smile. "It'll be nice to see them again."

Aoyama stared at the boy in front of him. If he knew Izuku was like him, he would have befriended him much sooner.

"You're going to meet with them tonight?" He asked. Midoriya nodded. "Well, you aren't going out with *that* shade of purple under your eyes."

Midoriya looked taken aback.

“Wh-what?”

“That shade of purple is far too light for your branch of goth! It would look better on a pastel, not an emo.” Yuuga said before going over to Izuku’s makeup and opening his eyeshadow palette. “Come here.”

Midoriya didn’t really have anything to say so he just sat in front of the blonde and let him do his makeup.

“Aoyama-kun, how come you aren’t put off by all of this?” He asked. Aoyama simply laughed softly to himself.

“Mon amie, I didn’t react like what you would expect because I am *le même.* The same.” The blonde stated. Midoriya looked at him with wide eyes.

“Wait! You mean you’re goth too!?”

Yuuga nodded. “Pastel, to be precise. Though I have always wanted to try your style. Sadly, I don’t have the clothes for it.” He sighed. Midoriya’s eyes lit up and as soon as Aoyama finished his makeup, he blasted for his closet and pulled out a large suitcase. Opening it up, Aoyama realized that there was an entire wardrobe of gothic clothing in there and watched as Midoriya pulled out a black suit, some black and studded bracelets, and clothing studs.

“You really want to try my style!? We still have an hour to dye your hair and get you ready. Let’s go!” Izuku said, adorable excitement in contrast to his dark appearance. It was so cool to be around another goth. In no less than forty-five minutes, the two boys were nearly unrecognizable and quickly snuck out of the dorms to meet with Midoriya’s ‘cult’.

Of course, that wouldn’t be the only time these two would hang out. If either of them was on shopping duty for the week, they would stop by gothic clothing stores and Hot Topic (the conglomerate) fairly often to grab a few more clothes and accessories. One time, while the

whole class was on a shopping trip, Izuku was browsing through the gauges area, thinking about getting a few piercings when he noticed Tokoyami staring at him from the other end of the aisle.

“Midoriya. I didn’t know you liked this kind of thing.” The bird headed boy stated, clearly surprised. Midoriya flushed in embarrassment and started stuttering.

“W-Well, I-I n-never really told anyone about it? I-I mean, it’s great that we like the same things, don’t get me wrong! I-I was just never really c-comfortable openly sharing it.”

Tokoyami nodded in response, understanding.

“Considering that your room is covered from head to toe in All Might merchandise, no one would guess you could be this dark. It’s a comforting sight, to say the least.” Midoriya smiled and nodded.

“You know, Tokoyami, Aoyama and I were planning on heading to the cemetery tonight. If you want to join us, we'd be more than happy to let you tag along.” The green haired boy offered. Tokoyami looked skeptical.

“You and Aoyama?”

“He's a pastel goth, apparently.”

“Why am I not surprised?” Tokoyami chuckled. Midoriya laughed along with him. The two paid for their items and went to meet up with the rest of the class.

After that, Izuku, Yuuga and Fumikage would hang out together late at night, on the roof of the dorms, talking and becoming good friends.

It was Golden Week at U.A, and students weren’t required to wear their uniforms for the day. Class 1-A was filled with color as almost all the students in the classroom wore their

comfortable casual clothing. Three students were missing from the group of twenty.

“Has anyone seen Deku?” Uraraka asked the class. In fact, Midoriya, Aoyama and Tokoyami were all later than usual. All three of them were usually in the classroom at least five minutes before class started.

Jirou perked up suddenly when the chatter from the classroom died down.

“Guys, I think I found them. But like, I’m hearing a million other voices around them as well.” She said, getting up from her seat. Most of the class followed suit until the door opened and there stood the remaining three class members, except almost no one would recognize them.

Izuku wore black jeans, a grey sleeveless shirt with a brown skull on the front, a leather jacket, black converse, fingerless leather gloves, a silver angel wing ring on his right hand and a overlapping wings necklace. His hair was pitch black and he had dark makeup on, a lip ring and gauges in his ears. He had black sunglasses on his head and a black beanie as well.

Aoyama was like a pale splash of color next to Midoriya. He wore a grey, striped t-shirt underneath a pastel blue, overly large sweater that had a bunny skull over crossbones. He wore grey pants with overall straps at his side that crossed over each other at the back, and black sneakers. He had a black wristband on his left arm, snake bite piercings under his bottom lip, gauges, and an extra piercings in his ears. On his head was a grey beanie, and his blonde hair was dyed pastel blue.

Tokoyami was the last of the trio. He wore something more old-fashioned. Black slacks, shiny black Balmoral boots, and a slick looking undershirt buttoned up to his neck with billowing sleeves. A wine red vest was buttoned across his chest with a pale white cravat tucked into it. A black cape was still fashioned around his shoulders, flowing elegantly behind him.

All three of them looked at the class. Izuku raised an eyebrow.

“Are you all okay? What’s going on?” He asked. Most of the class was still in shock at the trio. Bakugou got over his shock quickly and stormed over to them.

“What the fuck, Deku? Are you playing dress up or some shit!? Are you trying to look cool? You look fucking stupid!”

Midoriya gave him a bored look.

Midoriya took a breath and looked his former childhood friend dead in the eye.

“You know, Kacchan, do you ever wonder why I do the things I do? Probably not since you’re too busy sticking your head up your own ass to care. But let me tell you, every time you tell me to go die, I’ve actually considered it. I dress like this to openly say that I’m ready to die. We dress like this because our situations will kill us eventually. And what do you do when inevitable death is looming over you? You accept it. And that’s what we’ve done. So I suggest that you reconsider your attitude, because eventually, you’ll get yourself killed. Don’t blame me if you refuse to accept that reality.” He said, placing the sunglasses over his eyes and walking into the classroom, Aoyama and Tokoyami trailing behind him like guards. He sat down and the three started chatting casually with each other.

No one knew how to approach them after that, though some exchanged concerned glances. A wide circle was left around the goths and subtly Izuku smiled.

His goth debut went better than expected.

It's Been a While

Chapter by serenawitchwriter

Chapter Summary

Todoroki helps Midoriya with a family problem

Chapter Notes

IT'S TIME FOR A LONG CHAPTER WITH THE DADDY ISSUE DUO EVERYONE!!!

At 6:45 pm, the Midoriyas got a knock on their door. Todoroki and Midoriya both looked up from their spot on the couch where they were studying. Midoriya's mother was the one to open the door.

"Hi, sweetie!" the man who had knocked said with a smile.

Inko-san immediately slammed the door in the man's face. She did it so fast that Todoroki couldn't even get a glimpse of him.

The man started knocking again. Todoroki exchanged a look with Midoriya, who looked equally surprised and puzzled. Inko-san had never struck Todoroki as the type to act so rudely.

"Mom, who was that?" Midoriya asked.

"Don't you worry about it, honey," Inko-san said, forcing a smile. "Just a piece of garbage who should know better than to come around here. I'll get rid of him."

Midoriya and Todoroki exchange looks again.

“Do you need any help?” Todoroki asked cautiously.

“Oh, no, hun,” Inko said, still forcing a smile onto her lips. “It’s sweet of you to offer, but I can handle it. It might be better if you two go to Izuku’s room for a bit, though.”

Midoriya looked just as troubled as Todoroki felt, but reluctantly, they trudged to Midoriya’s room. Midoriya’s mom wasn’t someone who you disobeyed if you could help it. Todoroki wondered if it was ironic that he was more obedient to her than his own a father. Inko-san had never actively tried to make him do anything. She just asked, usually using the word please and he’d help her. His dad meanwhile pushed, prodded, screamed, hit, and ordered him to obey. At this point he might as well have been doing that to a mountain.

It wasn’t ironic, Todoroki decided, just hilarious.

They left Midoriya’s door open to try and eavesdrop. That didn’t end up being a problem, as the moment Inko-san reopened the front door, Todoroki discovered that Bakugou had *not* been exaggerating when he said she was a legendary cusser. She could make a sailor blush, and the amount of vitriol her words were dripping with might as well have been real acid. A secondary quirk, perhaps?

Midoriya was frowning slightly, his eyebrows scrunched like he was trying to remember something.

The yelling went on, and Todoroki flinched when he heard something shatter. From what he could glean from the words that weren’t swears, the man had no right to be here after all these years. He had proven to be a deadbeat piece of scum and she didn’t understand how she could ever love him.

“I think that’s my dad,” Midoriya said softly. He looked pale, but otherwise his expression was unreadable.

Todoroki frowned and glanced at the door. “Do they fight like this often?”

“I don’t know…” Midoriya trailed off. “I haven’t seen him in twelve years.”

That got a hum of surprise from Todoroki. Midoriya never talked about his own father and Todoroki never had thought to ask. It was clear that the man had been out of the picture, and Midoriya and Inko-san’s love seemed more than enough for the two of them. He had figured the man was dead… or All Might. That suspicion never went away.

Todoroki had no idea how to continue the conversation, so he and Midoriya just sat in silence, listening to his mom have a fit. Slowly his dad started yelling back. Things like ‘he’s my son, too’ and ‘you don’t have a right to keep him away from me!’

It wasn’t quite what his parents’ arguments had been, but it was definitely filling him with anxiety. Some rather dark memories started surfacing, but Todoroki pushed back against them. Now wasn’t the time. He had to focus on Midoriya, who was clearly more distressed by this.

Midoriya caught his uncomfortable expression anyway and asked, “Do you want me to ask them to stop?”

This entire situation was awkward. “I don’t think we should get involved.”

They were speaking in near whispers, almost afraid of getting noticed. Midoriya bit his lip. “Um, well, from what I can remember of my dad, this might go on for a while, so…” He closed the door and the screaming became slightly muffled, though not by much. The walls were thin. “Wanna do something else?”

Todoroki had no idea. He had no idea how to act in this situation. Was there social protocol for a friend’s parents fighting in the other room? When he was younger and his parents were fighting, Fuyumi would just rush him to the side of the house and try to distract him. It never

really made him feel better, and unless they wanted to escape through the window, this was probably as far from the fight they were getting.

"Sure." He said. And they ended up sitting on the bed glancing through books and absolutely failing to focus on them.

Around fifteen minutes went by. The fight outside was still happening. It was getting closer to the time where Todoroki would have to return home. "Do… do you wanna talk about it?"

That's what friends do, right? That seemed to be what Iida and Uraraka and Midoriya seemed to do for each other. Midoriya always offered an ear to listen to his problems. This seemed right, right? Todoroki could be considerate, hopefully.

Midoriya breathed a long sigh and put his book down. "I don't exactly know what to say… I mean, I don't know enough about him to have an opinion, right? That man might as well be a stranger to me. So it's fine."

Todoroki stared at his friend, reading his expression, "...Except it's not."

Midoriya groaned, flopped backwards, and covered his eyes with his arm. "Except it's not." He confirmed.

Another thing broke in the adjacent room.

Todoroki stayed silent, waiting.

"It's just like…" Midoriya trailed off trying to find the right words. "It's like I'm supposed feel something, right?" Midoriya gestured widely with his arms. "But I don't. I don't love him, I don't feel angry, I can't really miss him. I just… feel nothing, and I know I'm supposed to, but I don't."

Todoroki hesitated. “...Is that really a bad thing?”

Midoriya made a noise of frustration. “I don’t know.”

They went silent, Todoroki trying and failing to come up with a response.

Midoriya sighed again. “I used to wish he’d come back, you know. I’d always wanted to know what it was like to have a real father and I wished that maybe he’d… I don’t know chase the bullies away, help me become a hero, talk about analysis with me… teach me how to tie a freaking tie. But… he never came back. Mom stopped talking about him. Told me I didn’t need to worry about it and kinda discouraged me from asking about him. So my whole life there was just another empty space that I knew was supposed to be filled in but wasn’t. Other kids had dads, I didn’t. It was just another thing that made me different and weird.

“I used to think about it all the time. It was a bigger mystery than me not developing a quirk. At least that could be explained away by genetics, but my dad was just gone… poof. I wasn’t allowed to talk about it. His pictures disappeared. It was like he never existed in the first place.

“And eventually I just got over it. I mean, I barely had him to begin with so there wasn’t much to miss, and mom was everything I could possibly need or want. I didn’t want to upset her by bringing him up. She never talked about divorcing him or re-marrying someone else. I had to be what she needed back then, so I just forgot about him. I was just another kid without a dad, right? I couldn’t let him affect me with his absence. Because he’s nothing to me. A ghost, a name, a sperm donor. I shouldn’t care about him.”

“But you do,” Todoroki supplied calmly.

Midoriya let out another impossibly long sigh. “But I do.”

Todoroki considered his next words carefully. “Do you think... you should talk to him?

Midoriya pouted. “I don’t see what it’ll do. I have Mom so I’m fine”

“Except we’ve already established that you’re not.”

Midoriya sat up and stared at his folded hands. His expression remained bothered. “...It’s stupid…” He muttered. “...Why did he come back in the first place…?”

Inko-san let out a shrill shriek from the other room and they both flinched. Her yelling only got louder and angrier. If her swearing was any indication, she was fine.

“Could…” Todoroki had no idea how to do this. “Could it be that you’re scared?”

Midoriya tensed and stared at him with wide wide eyes. Todoroki had no idea what was going on in his head, but he seemed to be going on a mental journey. There wasn’t much Todoroki could do but wait for his friend to snap out of it. Honestly, this wasn’t even the first time. It was something Midoriya did. Midoriya’s head seemed to be a busy place. It wasn’t surprising that he sometimes got lost.

“I think…” Midoriya said slowly. “Scared isn’t quite the right word. I just… I want to understand him. I want to know why he left, but the mystery’s been part of me for so long that… I’m not sure if finding out the truth will change me.”

He just wanted closure, Todoroki knew is what he meant. Todoroki understood better than anyone. The gaping question mark in his life had haunted him up to his visit with his mother. The questions of ‘Why?’, ‘Does she hate me?’, ‘Can we fix this?’, ‘Is it too late?’ popped into his head every time he’d thought of her. It was also always accompanied by a deep pain in his chest. Closure, even if some of the answers weren’t satisfying, even if some of the answers weren’t what you wanted to hear, was better than the painful, hollow mystery.

Todoroki nodded. “I’ll help.”

“Ehhhhh!!!?”

He'd gotten lucky with his mom. Talking to her had changed him for the better, given him their relationship back.

He could only hope that Midoriya would be so lucky.

It wasn't until a little before ten that Midoriya's mom finally finished and kicked her husband out. She got very flustered when she realized how late it was and insisted that he spend the night rather than walk all the way to the train station so late. Todoroki noticed that her voice was rough from yelling so much and ultimately shrugged. He hadn't brought things to spend the night, so he'd have to borrow Midoriya's clothes and brush his teeth with his finger(which was gross), but he honestly liked the Midoriya household enough that he didn't mind.

He texted his sister, they ate a late dinner, and before he knew it he was in a pair of Midoriya's slightly too small All Might pajamas. He was grateful that Midoriya bought his clothes a little too big for himself. It meant the pajama bottoms weren't cutting off circulation to his legs. He was not grateful for the fact that Midoriya was laughing at him and taking pictures. The clothes, while not too tight, were short on him so his ankles were bare and his stomach was half showing, revealing the apparently hilarious fact that his happy trail, the hair leading from his belly button to his crotch, was also dual colored. He wanted to be happy that his friend felt like laughing now and that the awkward atmosphere was mostly gone, but his pride took a critical hit.

The next morning was a Sunday, and he appreciated the similarity of breakfast with the Midoriyas to breakfast with his sister. His father usually left early in the morning, so it would just be him and Fuyumi. Everything seemed a bit warmer when he wasn't there. The tension of the household never really left, there was always that underlying anticipation that Endeavor would walk back into the house at any moment, but breakfast in general was nice for Todoroki. Breakfast with the Midoriyas was nice too, though Midoriya kept shooting questioning looks at his mother.

Pulling on his clothes from yesterday was uncomfortable enough that Inko-san managed to convince Todoroki to see if one of her shirts would fit him better than Midoriya's. He was pleasantly surprised to find that they did, and left their apartment in a woman's blouse. He'd never really cared about his appearance, being forced into more 'fashionable clothes' by his dad's PR team, so it was refreshingly weird. Midoriya kept fretting and asking if he was sure it was okay, but Todoroki's sister had dressed him in far worse when he was younger so he knew he had nothing to be ashamed of.

Until they ran into Midoriya's father a mere block from Midoriya's house and the man gave him the dirtiest glare Todoroki had ever received, and that was saying something.

The man looked like Midoriya, but in a tangential way. He had dark curly hair and Midoriya's bone structure, but it was obvious that Midoriya took more after his mother. Weirdly neither parent had his freckles, perhaps that came from a grandparent? He was skinny and taller than Todoroki would have expected. With his puff of hair he looked a bit weedy, almost like a wrongly colored dandelion. He was dressed in finer clothes than the Midoriya household would suggest, meaning his money probably wasn't going toward their family.

Looks weren't everything, but Todoroki wasn't impressed.

"Hey, son…"

The man put his arm over Midoriya's shoulder and positioned himself in a way that was clearly shunning Todoroki while pulling Midoriya in, almost conspiratorially. He was acting far too familiar with his son for someone who hasn't seen him for twelve years, and Midoriya tensed when touched. Even Todoroki, who rarely touched anyone, knew Midoriya really hated being touched.

"...So anyway," the man continued. Apparently he was where Midoriya got his motormouth, because he'd been talking the moment they had met him and Todoroki had missed most of it. "We should catch up, talk to each other. Tell me how you've been, how the hero stuff's been. You know all the juicy details. I've missed you, you know?"

Todoroki marveled slightly at how good he and Midoriya had gotten at silent communication because with just their eyes they had both in unison said 'That's suspicious' when he brought up Midoriya's 'hero stuff'.

"A-actually me and Todoroki-kun are going to hang out today," Midoriya said, trying to squirm out from beneath his father's arm.

The man's looked away, pouting slightly but not looking particularly sorry. "You can't make time for your old man? You can hang out with your friend any other day, can'tcha?"

"But I said I was going to hang out with Todoroki," Midoriya said more firmly, successfully distancing himself from his father. " I keep my word."

The man frowned and tilted his head to the side as if considering something. "Todoroki… Todoroki… why does that name sound familiar?"

Midoriya looked at Todoroki to see if he wanted to answer.

"My father is Todoroki Enji, the Flame Hero: Endeavor." Todoroki kept his words clipped and precise.

The man's eyes widened and he looked almost hungry. "Really? Well isn't that a coincidence!" He swung his arms over both their shoulders now, dragging them into his space. "I have a flame quirk too. I can breathe fire, in fact. Like a dragon. Terrible when I sneeze."

He paused, as if expecting the boys to laugh. They didn't.

"Ha," the man continued as if there hadn't been an awkward silence. "So, anyway, how have you been, Little Bird? I see you got your quirk. Why didn't you tell me?"

"Little bird?" Todoroki couldn't help but ask, raising an eyebrow. Midoriya seemed grateful for the reprieve.

Mr. Midoriya, or as Todoroki was tempted to call him, Weird Guy, laughed lightly. "It's my little nickname for him. On account of this bird's nest he has." Weird Guy ruffled Midoriya's hair playfully. Midoriya ducked his head and drew into himself.

“I didn’t tell you because I didn’t think you’d care, Dad,” Midoriya said. The word *dad* sounded like it was foreign in his mouth.

“Why wouldn’t I care?” Weird Guy tilted his head and looked earnest. “I’m your dad, Izuku, of course I care about what’s going on with you. So tell me these things from now on. I’ll give you my number so you can keep in contact!”

“You haven’t cared before,” Midoriya muttered quietly.

“Great!” Weird Guy said loudly as if to cover up Midoriya’s bitter moment. “So, where were we, getting coffee? Sounds like a great plan. Come along kids, I’ll even treat you.”

Almost simultaneously, Midoriya and Todoroki slipped under the man’s arms again and fell in step with each other behind him. Weird Guy seemed to know where he was going, so they let him lead. He started going on and on about this place he used to go to and wondering if it was still there. Maybe it was just knowing that the man had abandoned his family, but something about the guy made Todoroki’s skin itch.

Todoroki silently looked at Midoriya to see if he was okay with this. His friend gave an unsure shrug and eventually they came to what Todoroki considered a seedy-looking coffee shop.

Weird Guy grinned crookedly and gestured with his hands. “Now this, boys, is where you can get the best espresso in the country. You just have to know how to ask. I’ll treat you, don’t thank me. I’m doing this out of the goodness of my heart.”

“I don’t really like coffee,” Midoriya said. It was an understatement. Despite his sleeping problems, Midoriya stuck strictly to tea. The one time Kirishima and Kaminari got a cup of coffee into him has since been referred to as ‘The Incident’ and is best not remembered. Actually, as far as Todoroki knows, the class has had several disasters referred to as ‘The Incident’, all being different things. It was kind of confusing, but he never cared enough to verbally question it.

“Sure you don’t,” Weird Guy brushed him off. “But just wait until you try the house blend, they’ll make a believer out of you.”

“If he doesn’t want coffee, he’s not going to drink coffee,” Todoroki said icily.

The man seemed to roll his eyes but smiled at him indulgently. “All right, all right, twist my leg why don’tcha. He can have a smoothie, don’t be so dramatic, it’s just a drink.”

Todoroki felt fire in his nerves but held his tongue.

“I’ll get us the drinks while you find us a table, yeah? Stick with me, Izuku. Father-son time, you know?” Midoriya’s dad said, waving his hand at Todoroki as if to say *move along.*
Midoriya gave him a withering look, but Todoroki tried to give him an encouraging smile.

He stepped away, hoping some alone time might ease some of the tension between them.

Todoroki found a seat at a table with an umbrella outside.

He stretched and took a seat. Waiting had him second-guessing himself. He had been the one to encourage Midoriya to talk to his father, but right now everything seemed so awkward and weird. Meeting his mother for the first time in years had been awkward too, but it wasn’t this kind of weird.

He wanted things to go well, he really did, but he was slightly out of his depth. He hoped his support would be enough, but what if it wasn’t? The man didn’t exactly give off Stain or Shigaraki vibes, heck, he didn’t even give off Endeavor vibes, but he did give off *some* sort of bad vibe. Todoroki didn’t want Midoriya to get hurt.

While waiting, Todoroki noticed just how run down and seedy the place really looked. Everyone in the place looked like they could just as easily be selling drugs in an alley than drinking coffee here. It put him on edge. He wondered what kind of person Midoriya’s father was to think it was a good idea to take two children here.

“Hey kid!” someone said right behind him. If Todoroki hadn’t grown up with his father’s training, he would have startled. Instead he kept the appearance of someone perfectly calm and turned raising an eyebrow. The stranger, who was shirtless with blue skin and hair, smirked at him.”If you’re going to imitate someone, I recommend changing clothes and picking someone a little less high-profile. I’m highly doubt Endeavor’s real kid would be caught dead in this dive wearing a women’s shirt.”

“Ah.” Todoroki gaped for a moment and then quickly shut his mouth. “I’ll take that under consideration.”

The guy leaned in a little closer. “I wouldn’t taking you under consideration, though. You busy?”

Todoroki held his ground and said spoke in a cold voice. “Yes.”

“Eh, well maybe when you’re done here…”

“Ehem,” someone cleared their throat loudly. Both Todoroki and the blue stranger turned to find that Midoriya’s dad had arrived with the drinks. Midoriya stood behind him looking slightly angry, possibly on Todoroki’s behalf.

The blue man paled the moment he saw Midoriya’s father. “I didn’t mean nothing by it,” he said too quickly, and then hurried off.

Todoroki frowned at the reaction, but accepted the cup of espresso put in front of him.

“Did you know him?” Weird Guy asked.

“No,” Todoroki said simply. “He was just offering me some advice.”

Midoriya's father snorted and plopped into his seat. Midoriya gave him a look silently asking if he was alright, and Todoroki gave a small nod.

"Well, if you have any problems you let me know, kiddo. You want to be careful in these parts." Weird Guy said seriously.

Midoriya said what Todoroki was thinking out loud. "Then why did you bring us here?"

"Because it's the best place to get espresso," the older man repeated with a shrug. Todoroki took a sip of the coffee just to check. He'd had better.

"So," Weird Guy said, not one to let silence linger. "Tell me about yourself, Izuku. What have you been up to since I've been gone? You got any friends? What are they like? What do you like? Tell me it all."

Todoroki remembered his mom asking similar questions, though not as fast. It had been awkward but it got better as they talked. Todoroki again offered Midoriya an encouraging smile.

"Well" Midoriya said glancing at Todoroki. "Well, um... as you probably know, I got into UA. I'm friends with just about everyone in class, including Todoroki, of course. They're all nice and surprisingly caring. They worry a lot but I guess that's just par to the course for hero work-" Todoroki resisted the urge to cut in and say it's par for the course of having a friend who is constantly injuring himself "I... well, I still love heroes, obviously, and analysis. So life's been going pretty well in that regard. I've been having fun and living my dream. I've been really happy. There's not much else to say, really."

"Hmm," the man hummed in interest. "Still passionate about heroes, huh? If I remember right, you interest was more specific. I hear All Might teaches at your school. What is he like? As cool as you used to think he was?"

Midoriya started blushing. "Yes," he said too enthusiastically. "He's the best. I mean, he's less of an impossible dream now and more of a down to earth person, but he's so cool and

kind and brave and he's really been there for me and our classmates. He's really willing to put himself on the line to protect us."

"Though he shows a bit of favoritism," Todoroki couldn't help but tease. Midoriya blushed deeper.

Midoriya's father laughed. "Good to know. How are you liking class? How are your other teachers? What is the hero course like?"

"Well, it's…" Midoriya paused, scrunching his eyebrows as he searched for the right word.

"Intense?" Todoroki offered.

"Yes." Midoriya snapped his fingers. "It can be really intense and physically demanding."

"Even our homeroom teacher is intense and demanding," Todoroki noted fondly. Aizawa-sensei has been surprisingly kind and supportive since the investigation of his father has started. He seemed annoyed that Todoroki had never brought the issue to him, but he offered him a safe place to stay if he needed it and has been one of the less biased people he's talked to.

Though a lot of the bias disappeared when Midoriya brought out his file on Endeavor. Todoroki swore to never make an enemy out of Midoriya when he saw it. Apparently when Midoriya was angry he was capable of digging up every piece of dirt and weakness someone had. Todoroki wouldn't be surprised if Midoriya received a consultation credit, though he might need a license for that… would his provisional license count, or would he need a whole separate one? It was something he'd have to look up.

The investigation was still out of the public eye, and would hopefully stay that way for as long as possible.

Midoriya laughed and Weird Guy hummed thoughtfully.

“You two are at least remembering to have fun and make trouble, right?” He asked. Midoriya and Todoroki exchanged a different kind of look.

“You could say that.” Midoriya said.

Weird Guy caught their tension. “I don’t mean death threats and villains,” he said, exasperated. “I mean women and alcohol. You’re teenagers! You’re supposed to be having fun, breaking some laws, getting messy!”

Considering Midoriya possibly murdered the last teenage womanizer that he’d met, it was safe to assume that wasn’t his thing. Todoroki himself had a healthy respect for women. Between his sister, his mother, Momo, and Uraraka, he wasn’t in a hurry to underestimate and piss any woman off. Women also tended to be nicer to him than men. Uraraka said it was because he was pretty and the other boys were jealous but he didn’t really see it. He wasn’t pretty, after all, his face was permanently disfigured. Maybe women were just nicer about that kind of thing?

Alcohol was also out. For Midoriya, it was a worse idea than coffee. For Todoroki, alcohol plus fire quirk was a bad idea. His control of his fire was already tentative as is. Todoroki did not want to risk lowering his impulse control. For all he knew, he’d start acting like his father or something. It was *not* worth the risk.

“We get messy enough,” Midoriya said tactfully. He’d probably have thought something along the same lines as Todoroki, only faster and with seventeen times the volume of pros and cons.

Weird Guy looked back and forth between them as if he were considering something. “What? Are you guys faggots?”

Midoriya drew a sharp breath and started blushing and flailing, looking a combination of outraged and embarrassed. *“Daaaaaddddd!”*

Todoroki just raised his eyebrows in a way that he knew made people squirm. In reality, he did not know what the word ‘faggot’ meant. He had heard it before, it had been shouted at his father and him by people in crowds at public outings and it was sometimes left as comments online, but no one had ever actually explained the meaning of the word. He asked his sister what it meant when he was nine and she had told him she’d explain it when he was older. Todoroki wondered if he was old enough to find out now.

Weird Guy just smiled wolfishly. “I’ll take that as a no for now. Let me know if you ever change your mind, son. Gay sex is a different talk than straight sex and you might need both.”

It had to do with being gay? And sex? Was that why his sister got embarrassed?

Midoriya, if it was possible, turned even redder. Todoroki, for his part, kept his face politely blank. Midoriya started trying to stutter something. “Th-that- we’re too- a-ahh- ahhhhhhhh-” He covered his face with his hands.

Midoriya’s dad burst out laughing. “Fine, fine, we’ll leave the sex talk for a later date. But loosen up a little, will ya? You’re getting to an age where you need to be able to talk about these things. Better to be healthy and open, then to be close-lipped and have no idea what you’re doing. You might get a disease or something.”

Todoroki tilted his head thoughtfully. “That’s a fair point.”

Todoroki knew very little about sex, the general sentiment in his family being, ‘don’t until you’re married and you’ll only get married when I say you can!’. It didn’t leave him particularly enthused about it. The other boys in the dorm talked about it like it was a shady secret. Their health class explained it in a purely biological way. The whole ‘how to deliver a baby’ section that followed the sex ed section was also off putting. He would genuinely appreciate a more straightforward explanation that didn’t involve Midnight implying he had weird kinks.

Weird Guy laughed and slapped him on the shoulder. “He gets it!”

Midoriya buried his face completely in his arms. “Please don’t encourage him, Todoroki-kun.”

“Okay,” Todoroki agreed easily.

He considered what to say before Weird Guy got on another tangent. He decided to cut straight to the point. “So, why did you abandon your family for ten years?”

Midoriya cut him a panicked look over his arms and Weird Guy froze. It was obvious to Todoroki that neither were going to bring up the subject on their own, so he supposed that it was a good thing he was here.

Weird Guy laughed nervously, “Little blunt, aren’tcha? I’m sure that’s any of your business, kiddo. Best kept in the family, you know?’

“Would you really answer if it was just Midoriya-kun?” Todoroki asked skeptically. He kept his face carefully blank. It wouldn’t do to show emotions here.

The man shifted a little, eyes narrowing slightly. “Yeah. Of course.”

Todoroki nodded and stood. “Then I will step away.” he put his hand on Midoriya’s shoulder and squeezed it for a moment, imagining he was transferring him his strength. Midoriya gave him a pleading look for a moment, but it didn’t take long for his expression to smooth out into a look of determination. ‘Thank you,’ he mouthed. Todoroki gave the slightest of nods and then stepped into the cafe, considering whether grabbing a bite to eat was worth it.

All eyes turned to him instantly and the entire room seemed to freeze. Todoroki wondered if it was because they knew who he was or because they thought he was someone else. Being the center of attention wasn’t a new sensation for Todoroki though, so he moved forward with poise and looked over the menu as whispers slowly started again.

He strained his ears to hear what they were saying, but failed to pick up words.

“I’ll have a chocolate croissant.” He decided. The barista looked slightly afraid of him. Todoroki couldn’t decide if this was normal intimidation or something-is-wrong intimidation. He’d stay wary. He settled in a seat inside the cafe by a window with a view of the Midoriya’s just in case. Midoriya looked tense, but his eyes were burning. His dad was waving his arms around a lot. Todoroki frowned at that, but he’d let it play out for now.

Yet another stranger approached him. Todoroki wondered if he had a target painted on him. Was it the shirt? It might be the shirt.

“Hey, kid, how old are you?” This time it was a gruffer older lady with an eye-patch, wild looking scars, and strange clay-like hair.

“I don’t see how that’s any of your business,” Todoroki said in a tone that could pass for polite.

The woman smirked at him. “Cool your jets, Peppermint, I don’t want anything from you. I just wanted to give you a warning.”

Todoroki looked between her and the window and felt his gut twist. “Please don’t tell me the black haired guy is bad news.”

The woman smiled wider and Todoroki noticed that her teeth were clay, too. “Fine,” she said almost teasingly. “I won’t.”

Todoroki mentally groaned. “Can you tell me how bad?”

“Not without a price.”

Figures. “Thank you, then. Have a nice day.”

Todoroki went back to his croissant and the woman backed up. Outside, Midoriya was starting to look upset. He wasn't yelling or gritting his teeth the way he did when he was fighting. Instead he was starting to look small and self-conscious. Todoroki didn't like that look.

His dad was still waving his hands around defensively. Todoroki knew enough about body language to guess that he was playing the victim. It was kind of annoying, especially when Midoriya looked like a kicked puppy.

Todoroki debated whether it was time to cut in when Midoriya suddenly slammed his hands down on the table and started to shout. His voice was muffled by the window, but his voice did carry enough that the cafe patrons turned to look. Todoroki did not envy the position Weird Guy was in, but frankly, he probably deserved it.

Weird guy was still acting like the victim, and Midoriya had frustrated tears in his eyes by the time he stormed off. Todoroki stood to go after him, but froze when Weird Guy seemed to laugh and roll his shoulders.

Weird Guy stepped back into the cafe and shrugged. "Family troubles."

He spoke as if it was nothing, and Todoroki felt the familiar icy bitterness he felt around his own father.

"Mr. Midoriya," he said, voice revealing nothing. The man turned and looked slightly startled. He seemed to have forgotten that Todoroki was there. "A word."

The man laughed again and Todoroki hated him. So much for reuniting with his family. He didn't care. That was obvious in every way. He didn't deserve to be in Midoriya's life.

"Sure thing, kid, what do you got?" Weird Guy said, coming over to his table. Todoroki caught the momentary calculating look in the man's eyes and wondered if that was something else Midoriya got from him. No, he decided, Midoriya and Inko-san were far smarter than him. They knew how to read a room.

The rest of the cafe patrons were eavesdropping, Todoroki knew. He wondered if he cared. He silently decided what was the best approach for this kind of man. Finally he settled on, “You’re a businessman, correct?”

The man opened his arms wide. “You got me.”

“Then you understand what cost-benefit is, correct?”

The man tilted his head to the side as if wondering where this was going. “It’s pretty basic, kid.”

Todoroki nodded, face still revealing nothing. “You seem to have a lot backing you.” Todoroki shot a glance towards the rest of the cafe. People quickly avoided eye contact. “You seem to know what you’re doing.”

The man grinned turned hungry, and he drew closer. “You’re a smart kid, aren’tca? You looking to make a deal?”

“No. I am giving you a warning,” he said, and he intentionally lowered the temperature of the room until it felt frigid. “If you go toe to toe with your son, you will lose everything.”

Weird Guy seemed momentarily shocked, but then he snorted. “Speaking from experience, are we?”

Todoroki met his dark brown eyes. They were plain compared to Midoriya’s bright green. “Fortunately, no.” Todoroki felt sure their fight would have turned out quite differently if Midoriya had really wanted to hurt him. As it was, his friend was steadily becoming scarier under Nedzu’s tutelage and the private hobbies he’d been picking up on his own. “I know a losing battle when I see one.”

The man’s eyes glinted. “That sounds like a challenge.”

Todoroki remained a blank canvas. “It’s a warning,” he said firmly.

He turned and left with another word. He felt the tension break behind him, but that didn't matter. He needed to catch up to Midoriya.

Midoriya had found his way to a park swing set. His face was streaked with tears but he was glaring at the ground as if it had wronged him. Todoroki shifted from foot to foot. He wasn’t good at comforting. Finally he took a seat in the other swing and hoped that Midoriya would come to him. That sometimes worked.

It felt like a long time. If tense silence wasn’t something he was familiar with, Todoroki might have squirmed.

“He left because I was quirkless,” Midoriya said almost too softly to hear. Tears started to flow down his cheeks again. “Apparently, I was too worthless for him. He needed a strong son. Someone who could inherit his company. Someone like me couldn’t do it.”

The parallel between Midoriya’s father and Todoroki’s own was sort of eerie. Both had fire quirks. Both wanted a successor. The only real difference was that Todoroki was ‘perfect’ and Midoriya wasn’t. Todoroki wondered if Midoriya would have ended up living a similar life to his own if he had been what the man wanted. The idea made him feel slightly sick.

“Fuck him,” Todoroki said flatly. He was following Midoriya’s lessons in swearing; he meant it.

Midoriya laughed a little. “I-I know I shouldn’t be this upset. He was an asshole the moment he walked out on us, and probably before that... but just knowing that it’s my fault…”

“It’s not your fault.” Todoroki said, feeling almost annoyed that Midoriya would blame himself for this. His friend’s guilt complex was slightly ridiculous. “You had no control over when your quirk manifested, and the fact that he’d let something so stupid change how he felt

about you, especially when you're so…" Todoroki tried to figure out a word to describe him and ended up just gesturing at him, "you, just proves how stupid he is. He doesn't deserve you."

Midoriya sniffed and did his best to wipe the tears from his face. "Y-you know he was the reason my mom yelled so much when I was younger? I bet she'd say the same thing."

"Your mother is an intelligent lady," Todoroki said seriously. Not intelligent enough to avoid that loser, he thought silently, but then again she shared Midoriya's soft heart. Maybe she thought she could help him or something.

Midoriya smiled, but the his eyes remained downcast. Guilt chewed at Todoroki for convincing him to interact with the asshole. Being a hero was about sticking your nose in other people's business, but no one talked about what to do when you made the situation worse.

"You got your answers, though?" Todoroki asked, slightly tentative. "Right?"

That seemed to bring some train of thought to an end and Midoriya blinked and looked up, expression settling.

"Yeah… yeah, I suppose I did."

Todoroki had no idea how to read into that. He kicked off the ground and started swinging slightly. "If it makes a difference," Todoroki said, keeping his tone light, "I still think you're All Might's love child."

Midoriya let out a choking laugh, clearly caught off guard. "Wh-why?"

"You take after him more," Todoroki said, swinging higher. "If not by genetics, then by adoption or something. You act just like him."

“I do not!” Midoriya said, but he was smiling now. “If we’re going by attitude, than you’re *Aizawa’s* love child!”

Todoroki snorted. “You say that like it’s a bad thing.”

“Oh, I don’t know,” Midoriya teased and began swinging too. “Can you imagine growing up around Aizawa?”

Todoroki hummed thoughtfully. “Point taken. I’d still take him over Enji, though.”

“Fair.” Midoriya agreed. “Should I start calling you Aizawa-kun, then? It might get confusing.”

“Only if I can start calling you Yagi-kun.” Todoroki rolled his eyes. “You know, you could always just call me my name.”

“Huh?” Midoriya said dumbly.

“Shouto.” Todoroki supplied. “It *is* my hero name, you might as well get used to it.”

“Ah!” Midoriya went completely red. “Th-then you can call me Izuku! J-just to avoid confusion, right?”

Todoroki grinned the private smile he only reserved for his close friends. “Okay, Izuku.”

Midoriya, if possible, blushed harder and hid his face in his hands. “O-okay, Shouto.”

And if Todoroki's heart beat a little faster, no one but him would know it.

They played in the park for a couple hours longer. Midoriya had been horrified to find out that Todoroki's jungle gym growing up had been more militaristic and didn't have things like slides or swings or a tether ball. He stubbornly made him play all the two-person games he could think of and explained all the games that required more players. It was fun, Todoroki admitted out loud. Midoriya… Izuku had beamed like the sun at him.

In that time, a feeling settled in Todoroki's chest, a kinship that he hoped Izuku shared. Maybe both their fathers sucked. Maybe Izuku's father would rise to Todoroki's supposed challenge. Maybe Enji would break his promise to get better. But if there was anything Todoroki had learned since joining class 1-a, it was that family could be found anywhere. It could be chosen.

All of 1-a was his family, but in a way that went beyond heroics and saving each other's lives, Izuku would always be his brother.

Fandom

Chapter by serenawitchwriter

Chapter Summary

ONE OF US! ONE OF US! ONE OF US! Deku gets an army

Chapter Notes

i have a headache but wanted this to be out on time, so it's not as edited as it could be. i'll prob fix it up later

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It started like this.

“And now, dear listener’s, this week in the ***Up and Coming*** we have a guest a little younger than you’re used to. A student in the now infamous class of 1-A, a finalist in the sports festival and all around one the cutest little heroes, we’ve got with us today the hero who doesn’t give up, Deku. Hello Deku!”

“U-uh-um hi!” Midoriya’s voice said over the radio. “F-first time guest, long time listener. It’s *really* nice to be here, Present Mic.” his voice pitched in a way that said he was almost crying from nervousness.

Present Mic laughed. “It’s nice to have you here, kiddo, now let get to the brass tacks. You made quite an impression at the sports festival, wanna tell us how you were feeling and what was going through your mind while out there?”

“Um…” Midoriya said, clearly dying from embarrassment. Mic would do his best to ease him out of that. One of the reason he brought Midoriya on the show first was to show him what the interview process and limelight was like. Hero’s had to deal with the media all the time and it’s be easier to learn the ropes with someone he was familiar with. Present Mic did

this with all his students, usually when they reached year two, at least, but class 1-a, already being a villain magnet, was a special case. Mic figured that if they already had to deal with all the bad stuff they deserved to see some of the good stuff too. Was it blatant favoritism? Kinda, but he'd introduce Blood King's class too, it'd just be year two by then.

"Well I was, uh, thinking about of things honestly. I was trying to win obviously but i also had to be careful with the backlash of my quirk. I obviously couldn't win if all my bones were broken. Obviously that didn't work out for me anyway… but uh, I've been managing to get a better handle of my quirk since then, so i don't break my bones anymore… most of the time." Midoriya was painfully awkward and all over the place. The professional in Mic inwardly cringed, but the found teacher in him found it endearing.

"So your training has been going well," Present Mic asked keeping his voice breezy and enthusiastic. "Where do you see yourself in a couple years? What kind of hero do you want to be?"

"Well," Midoriya said and hesitated for a moment. "I want to be the kind of hero that people look at and feel safe. I want to give people hope, so I guess I want to be pretty versatile. I'm the 'You can do it' hero, not just because I want to be the kind of hero that can save anyone, but because I want to encourage that belief in other. I mean, two years ago being where I am today seemed impossible. If I can come even this far then I'm sure you can do it to! You can overcome your hardship! Plus Ultra!"

Midoriya spoke with surprisingly confidently when he spoke about his dreams. His eyes were sparkling and he looked absolutely adorable.

"Inspirational," Present Mic decided to tease him a bit. "Sounds a bit like another hero i know… are you a fan of our recently retired number one hero, Deku?"

Midoriya instantly turned pink and flustered. "well, i mean yes, who isn't a fan of all might. He's the number on hero for a reason."

Present Mic smirked. He could imagine Yaga blushing now. "Well with All Might working at the school and all, how did that first meeting go? Did you have a fanboy meltdown?"

Midoriya covered his face with his hands. “Yes,” he said voice still clear on the microphone. “I met him awhile before school started during a villain attack. He saved me and then I vomited and passed out because I was suffocated by the villain for a bit and he was there when I woke up and I cried and it was awful.”

Present Mic couldn’t help but laugh despite himself. “That sounds quite harrowing. All Might’s a good guy though, I’m sure he was cool about it.”

“Yes, he signed my notebook,” Midoriya said face still covered with his hand. Mic could see his red ears sticking out of his hair though.

Present Mic laughed again, keeping up a positive mood. “That was nice of him. Word on the street is that you’re a hero fan is that true?”

If possible Midoriya looked even more embarrassed. He looked like he’d melt through the floor if he could. “Yes.”

“That’s pretty cool, is that one of the reasons you want to be a hero? To meet your heroes?” Mic took on a teasing tone again. Teasing Midoriya was too much fun.

“Ah, more like I’m a fan of heroes because it’s my dream to be one. I want to help people so it makes sense that I’d admire the people who help people, right?” he spoke bashfully then as an afterthought “Oh, I also appreciate doctors and police officers. I’m pretty sure society would collapse without them, heheh, my scars agree that doctors don’t get enough appreciation.”

Present Mic smiled warmly. It was I nice subtle shout out to Recovery Girl. “Well it’s good to see a young hero with their heart in the right place. We’re gonna take a short break now and coming up we’ll open up the lines to some caller questions. Keep listening, lovelies, YEAAHHHHHHHHH!!!!!!!”

Mic flipped one of the switches on his soundboard that would turn on some prerecorded commercials and turned off his and Midoriya’s microphones for the time being.

Midoriya was looking anxious.

“Hey, how you feeling? Is it as bad as you expected?” Mic asked, trying to keep his student in a good head space.

“I’m going to die of embarrassment.” Midoriya said firmly. “Why did I say all that? Oh god, I’m going to become a meme again. And then I’m going have to leave UA and move and change my name and shave my head because my hair is too recognizable-”

“Hey,” Mic cut off the ramble before Midoriya could get to lost in it. “Don’t worry kid, you’re doing great. You’re modest and kind, people eat that stuff up. Don’t worry they’ll love you.”

Midoriya didn’t look like he believed him but he closed his eyes, took a deep breath and calmed down. “I-okay. If they hate me, it’s not like I can stop them.” Midoriya clenched his fist and seemed to gather his courage

There was a pause.

“...again, as in you’ve been a meme before?”

Midoriya’s eyes snapped open and he stared with scarily intense eyes “ ***We never speak of that!"***

A little freaked out, Mic agreed, though everything but his survival instinct told him to prod further. He’d look it up later..

Mic’s producer signaled him and mic nodded “okay, kid, we’re going back on air, you ready?”

“As i can be,” Midoriya said looking a little sick.

“Okay! First caller you’re on with Present Mic and Deku, YEAHHHHHHHHHH!!!!!! What question do you want to ask our prying ears.” Mic had already done his opening spiel about the radio station and the like. He had that bit memorized to the point of being a second instinct. Mic was pretty sure he’d screamed it at some villains before.

“You’re a *fanboy* !?” the caller asked with an dangerously desperate enthusiasm. No build up or hesitation Mic knew the question wasn’t for him then

Midoriya laughed sheepishly, shooting a bug eyed look toward Mic, despite that Mic was pretty sure some of the audience was swooning and how cute he sounded. “Heheh, yeah, I spent a lot of time on the forums when I was younger and even made some fan art though it obviously wasn’t very good. Still do sometimes.”

The caller screeched. “Oh my god! That is so cool! What’s your blog name? What kind of content do you post? Can you marry me?”

Midoriya’s smile became a little more nervous. “Um… I’m sorry. I don’t think it’s safe for me to say my blog name here. I usually post hero analysis and video breakdowns. And like I said I also do fan art. But it’s so embarrassing. You wouldn’t want to see it anyway.”

The girl across the line screamed again and Present Mic smoothly cut the call off. With a polite transition, the next caller came on, apparently following the theme of the first.

“If you’re really a fanboy, than who’s your favorite hero?” the male caller asked with obvious superiority and skepticism. “What’s your favorite fight? And why?”

Midoriya took on a more professional expression. “Well, I’ve already said it was All Might, didn’t I? For obvious reasons. I know it’s cliche to go for the number one hero but All Might’s influence can be seen throughout society and will last far after his death. He’s the great hero of a century. My favorite fight has to be his debut, where he saved at least 100 people from a burning building. I know he’s achieved greater feats since them, but he sure did make a great first impression. Admittedly, I have nostalgia for that one. The video of that rescue ignited my passion for heroics when I was four. It was probably the coolest thing I’ve

ever seen. Does that answer your question or oh! Does a rescue mission not count as a hero fight, because to pick one hero fight is considerably harder. There's a lot more factors to take into account…"

Midoriya began to descend into muttering. The microphone wasn't catching him well, but Present Mic decided to leave it on to be funny. "I think that's a good enough answer, Deku. How about you dear listener?"

There was a pause over the line and for a moment Mic thought there was a delay on the call. The the male caller said a begrudging, "He passes."

Midoriya broke from his reverie, sounding completely horrified, "Wait, that was a test!?"

Present Mic breezes along, expertly keeping them on schedule. The next few questions followed in the same manner. Apparently the hero fans were excited to talk to a fellow fan. The questions ended up being more about Midoriya's opinion on other heroes than any details about himself or his future.

But the thing was, Midoriya was good at this. He was smart about his answers and he never seemed to reveal too much even when he could. His anxiety seemed to slip away when he was thinking about his answers and he was good with the fans. He was open and understanding and calm and he treated them as people rather than just anonymous entities, that he'll probably never speak to again. He laughed and jokes and somehow managed to be more charismatic than Mic has personally ever seen him.

Mic barely had to talk at all, which was… new.

But Midoriya was finally looking relaxed and smiling.

"F*ck, marry, kill: the top three heroes." the new caller said too quickly. Mic spoke too soon.

“Kill Endeavor, marry All Might, and…” Midoriya began without hesitation but abruptly trailed off flushing. “Make love to Best Jeanist. Why would you ask me that? I know All Might and Endeavor in real life.”

Deku buried his head completely in his arms, face cherry red.

“You know Endeavor but still chose to kill him? That’s a *Burnnnn* .” the caller laughed at their own pun.

“Knowing him in real life is why I chose to kill him,” Midoriya said automatically.

“Woah-ho, beautiful listeners, this is getting dangerously close to slander,” Present Mic cut in, caught off-guard by Midoriya’s sudden deadpan humor..

“Wow, Endeavor’s lawyers must be busy if his ego is so fragile that he thinks a fifteen year old talking smack will damage his reputation.” Midoriya’s stutter and embarrassment seems to magically disappear when he insults Endeavor.

And Present Mic burst into laughter, taking a good portion of his listeners down with him. He tried to say something but just burst into laughter, settling instead to flip a switch on his sound board that he nicknamed the shade cannon. It played air horns and he flipped it when someone threw the most effective shade. Midoriya’s face split into an excited smile that made any risk of lawsuit worth it. He apparently never expected to be part of that bit and positively glowed now that he was.

“I-I think we need to go to commercial break so that I can catch my breath.

The rest of the show ended up continuing in a similar manner. Fans just kept calling in wanting to know Deku’s opinion on heroes and fandom culture and Midoriya had a lot of answers. The boy looked like he was having a lot of fun and seemed a bit disappointed when Present Mic had to end the show.

Present Mic wasn't prepared for the fan response after though. See while many heroes said they were fans of other heroes, and sighted their inspiration and mentors with ease, very few heroes were fanboys. In the three hour radio show Midoriya had proven to Mic's audience that he was the real deal, that he was one of them but also the public hero that everyone wanted to be. Midoriya had proven himself to be funny and clever and charismatic and one of them. He was theirs. Not some distant figure looking down on them, but someone who had been a friend, part of their community. Someone who was still their friend apparently.

Which meant that practically overnight Midoriya became the heroes fandom's hero. It also meant that Mic's inboxes were filled with letters, emails, and messages demanding that he bring Midoriya back on the show. The fan response was overwhelming actually. Deku's episode was quickly entering the top ten of highest listened to episodes Present Mic has ever produced. And was still gaining.

Present Mic spent some time debating it. He had to be fair to the rest of Midoriya's classmates and give them their episodes yet. He was also all to aware that Midoriya was still a student and drawing so much attention to him could be dangerous, especially if it seemed like he was giving Midoriya special treatment by welcoming him back on the show. But Midoriya already had the attention. The fan demand was too overwhelming to ignore. And Mic would be lying if he didn't acknowledge the lucrative opportunity he had here.

So coming to a decision Present Mic approached Midoriya a week later.

"Hey, Midoriya, would you like your own radio show?"

Chapter End Notes

-the meme mystery shall be explained in a later chapter
-giving midoriya a radio show (or podcast) is one of the worst(read best) ideas i've ever had
-midoriya throwing shade at Endeav*r gives me life

In Ink

Chapter by serenawitchwriter

Chapter Summary

Midoriya receives a letter from a fan

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Dear Hero Deku,

I told you I'd be following your progress. Knowing how the prison system works this letter is probably getting to you late or not getting to you at all, but I'm sure you haven't forgotten me.

I've heard you've gotten up to quite a bit since I've last seen you. Fighting Muscular and winning is quite impressive, especially considering it was in defense of a child. Personally speaking I think Muscular is the worse kind of scum imaginable. Senseless murderer, seeking violence for the sake of violence. If I were allowed I would kill him just as readily as I would any false hero. Villains deserved to be killed far more than heroes in my opinion, but interestingly murdering villains doesn't get anyone's attention. When I murdered villains only thirty percent of their bodies were noted on the news and I never even tried to hide my work. It was like the world was just willing to forget them.

It sometimes makes me wonder if that's one of the reason they became villains in the first place? Very few wish to live in obscurity, I've noticed. It's always struck me as rather silly. A life's value is not determined by the amount of fame one has achieved, but the difference you have made. And that kind of value cannot be determined by others. Only you can decide what you have made is worth something and only you can decide what you value. To put your own worth and your own values in the hands of others is suicidal and yet so many do it. So many are blind to the harm they bring unto themselves.

Back to the Muscular fight, I must say that I'm disappointed in you, Deku. You were so much cleverer in your fight against me. I am sure you must have noticed that Muscular's weakness was his eyes. A bit brutal for a hero like you, but given the circumstances you were in your

right. You were protecting a child after all. Instead you resorted to a battle of brute strength and ultimately hindered yourself in the battle to come. A hero has to be clever ,too, Deku. You know this. I should hope you perform better in your next fight.

The fight in Kamino Ward afterwards was significantly more important. I've heard you were there. Why am I not surprised?

The news about All Might is… in truth I cannot be disappointed. It is true that his time is passing and that our fated battle may never come to pass. But it brings him up in my esteem. He has sacrificed much in his battle for good than I had assumed. He has saved so many lives and brought light to so many people. The fact that it had such a heavy cost only proves that he is a selfless hero. Even powerless I believe he will still fight to protect people.

But being defeated by him seems less likely now, so I will hand my faith to you instead and ask that you make the world a better place. You will, I hope become, the next light to defeat the worlds darkness.

Moving on, I've heard some interesting things through the grapevine. Apparently I have fans. Seems a little pathetic honestly. I never set out to be a role model and yet I'm sure these strangers are going to try and be me. Even though I doubt they even understand the full scope of my vision. If they make some good in the world all the better, but I doubt it. I've noticed that people are misunderstanding my doctrine. Especially with the League of Villains sniffing around for new recruits like a pack of bloodhounds. I regret ever agree to work with them.

But at least it lead to meeting you.

Finding information about you has been an adventure in itself. I watched your sport festival performance. Breaking limbs is a bit of a habit of yours, hm? While injury is an unavoidable part of the job, I will warn that you should take better care of yourself. If you are so reckless with your body you will burn out before you've even begun. Would all might act so recklessly? I think not. You have proven yourself smarter than this, act smarter in the future.

Your performance in the festival was quite interesting. Most markedly your battle against the Todoroki spawn was fascinating. What you were saying wasn't recorded but I am fairly decent at lip reading. Tell me, Hero Deku, did what message you were trying to get through to him really stick? In my experience people don't change. I suppose the fact that he was the one

you called for aid during our fight is speaking of your relationship. But I know he's still the piece of garbage his father raised. A little fight cannot erase the poison that's in his blood. He's just waiting to bleed that poison into the world.

You should be less naive.

but… I suppose your faith in others is what makes you a hero.

Beyond that, I am proud of you. While you are still a newborn fawn, you are bound to be clumsy but you still have the heart of a hero. You've given me no reason to doubt that and the more i discover about you the more that is proven.

Now, I suppose that's enough about you. I've heard that you are rather fond of hero analysis. Oh, Deku, I am so glad to find we have that in common. I can tell you stories about heroes, Deku. I can open your eyes to a side of heroism you've yet to see. And I suppose since I've said my piece about what you've been up to, it's only fair I say what I've been up to.

Keep in mind, I know my letters are being looked over by the police, so I can't get too racy. They might not deliver my letter if I do and that's the last thing I want.

So where to begin, well, I'm regretfully a bit of a celebrity in here. That was never my intention when I set out on my crusade and really it's proving as more of an inconvenience than anything else. Very few people are fond of me, whether it be because they are jealous of my fame or because they disagree with my ideology. Everyone who doesn't fall into that category either admires or fears me. It's quite funny actually. Fame has made me more isolated than when I was intentionally keeping my head down.

I can't say I mind. These people are filth who I would kill if i had a knife.

Except for one boy. I wouldn't dare name him but he has been a delight. Imprinted on me like a baby bird when i arrived and unlike me he doesn't have a life sentence to worry about. I am doing my best to shape him to be the necessary evil to your light. Given the nature of his quirk and his crimes it is too late to shape him into a proper hero. But he will at least make things interesting for you in the future, so you can look forward to that.

I've also been hearing some rather interesting things about a Pro you might know. Have you perhaps met the 'hero' Mount Lady? She works in your area and given the size of her ego, she is very hard to miss. We have a lawyer in here who was caught laundering money for her. Apparently the property damage allegations brought against her were quite significant, especially in comparison the the size of the crime. He mentioned a case where she destroyed an entire store front and damaged a building's foundation in an attempt to stop a purse snatcher. Millions of dollars in damage to stop the loss of presumably around a hundred bucks. How heroic, indeed. In the end to fend off allegations and lawsuits, the lawyer had to pay off reporters and government workers and in turn he had to get that money from somewhere…

Innocent business owners and a few loan sharks seemed to do the trick until he got caught.

Of course when the money laundering scandal broke, Mount Lady washed her hands of him, despite all the efforts he made to protect her. He took all of the blame and when he tried to bring allegations against her, he was silenced and any possible wrongdoing on her part was swept under the rug.

You'll find. Deku, that a lot of heroes crimes are swept under the rug. That is the nature of the current system. The government would rather lie and keep people pacified, than have them know the truth and try to change things. It's has an ouroboros effect. By hiding the truth, they are making more room for the shadows. The more shadows they create, the more there is to hide.

Their attempts to keep the public happy is killing the light as we speak. At least with the truth and the violence of our world exposed heroes can be more prepared to face it. I'd like to believe that the true heroes would appear to fight if they could see how truly disgusting the world is.

I believe that you would.

But it is getting late and this letter is getting long, I will cut this letter here. Expect further correspondence in the future,

Until next time,

Chizome Akaguro, the Hero Killer: Stain

Todoroki finished reading the letter feeling thoroughly perturbed. “Midoriya, why do you have this?”

Midoriya jumped and paled when he saw what Todoroki had found tucked into one of his notebooks. “Oh god… uh… well, he kinda mailed it to me not long after the incident. The police were very thorough in there examination of it. It’s safe.”

Todoroki found himself giving Midoriya a incredulous look. This was one of those moments where he felt like Midoriya was from an alien planet. “Yeah, but why did you *keep* it?”

Midoriya covered his face and looked in that moment like he was preparing for death.

“It’s my first piece of fan mail.”

Chapter End Notes

when I thought of this concept I wanted to go a lot darker but when i wrote it it didn't come out that way?
writer brain why are you like this?

Eyes that Blaze and Burn

Chapter by serenawitchwriter

Chapter Summary

Survival tip: Don't mess with Midoriya Inko

Chapter Notes

happy mother's day :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

If there were two things Midoriya Inko's son got from her it was her intelligence and her anxiety. They shared a lot more than that, of course, but those two things always felt the most prevalent.

Anxiety to some degree felt natural She was a single woman living in a world where violence and destruction and crimes had become commonplace. For a long time her son was among the most vulnerable people in the world's population. She's watched first hand as her son was discriminated against. Her husband, a man she thought she loved, abandoned her and her son when he couldn't handle that their son was different. You'd excuse her for being slightly paranoid, thank you very much.

The world was cruel and their situation was hard. She'd found out the hard way, again and again, that she was not strong enough to protect her son completely. She tried her best, she did everything in her power, but she couldn't stop him from growing and she couldn't take his freedom of choice away to protect him.

She could only prepare him and support him and watch him and love him. It hurt sometimes. Sometimes, she was more scared than she could possibly stand. But she loved her son and she believed in him. He was braver and sweeter than anyone she had ever met and she had the privilege of being his mother.

Things had changed slightly in the anxiety department. Before she was worried about bullies and villains and some vague threat she couldn't predict hurting her son, now she was afraid of very specific villains attacking her son who could absolutely defend himself but who was also entirely too reckless for his own good. She couldn't decide which was better. The latter brought her son a lot closer to death on a regular basis but he was growing faster than ever and proving more and more that he could take care of himself and moreover he seemed happier than ever before. Having a quirk meant he had friends and more support and he could move forward and live his dreams… she just wished he could have done all of that quirkless. If anyone could have made something out of his quirkless status it was Izuku. He deserved everything and she wished that he hadn't had to change himself to get it.

Izuku wasn't as good of a liar as he thought he was and she knew about All Might. She understood why he'd been lying to her. A power that could be passed from user to user as powerful as All Might's was very dangerous indeed. She just wondered why he had to pass it onto her son. It made him happy, but it was obviously dangerous and it had a lot of weight attached to it. Her son was only fourteen years old when he got it. Hadn't he lost enough of his childhood to discrimination? Now he had to lose it to villains and a power he can't control?

She just couldn't stop worrying about these things. It was all out of her control. She knew that but that didn't stop her from wanting to wrap her son up in blankets and bubble wrap and preventing him from ever leaving her sight. She didn't know what she would do if he died and unfortunately death seemed to be gradually edging closer with every near miss that passed.

So, Inko supposed, that's where the intelligence came in. She was the one who first encouraged Izuku to analyze heroes.

She loved heroes too, of course. She'd always admired the bravery it took to do their jobs. She'd always admired the kindness that they showed to public. Izuku, of course, took that admiration and ran with it, turning it to his lifelong dream and motivation. He wanted to be brave, kind, and most of all he wanted to help people. He wanted to save people and make them smile. He was her little hero.

When they were told his dreams were out of reach… well, admittedly, she could have handled it better. She was human and she'd been scared. Obviously, she was still scared, but she hadn't believed in her son as much as she should have.

At least one thing she did right was teach him analysis.

See, one of her main ways of coping with anxiety was analyzing situations and figuring out solutions. Things seemed a lot less scary when she was relatively prepared for them and to be prepared you needed to understand things. You needed to know how to react and understand what was happening around you. She knew a lot about crime and when attacks were likely to happen and how to evacuate a building, what to do if there was a fire or if she was to become a hostage. She knew even more about child rearing and protection.

'What if's' were constantly running through her head, and she was constantly searching for solutions. She'd hoped that it would help her son and to some extent she thinks that it has. He had grown to be very clever, though knowing solutions and applying solutions seemed to be two very different things.

He was getting better at the second part she hoped…

Inko was jarred from her thoughts by a subtle scratching noise. She looked around and blinked wondering what it could be. It was coming from the front door and with a jolt she guessed that someone was picking the lock!

Not good! Not good! Inko rushed to the kitchen to grab a weapon. She wasn't the best fighter by any means but since Izuku developed a quirk and started attending UA, Inko had become convinced that being prepared for a possible villain attack against her was wise. She wasn't nearly as fit as Izuku but she'd been losing weight and the self-defense classes she'd been taking made her feel slightly more prepared.

She'd also been training her quirk. She wasn't perfect or anywhere near a hero but she was getting better control and even if she still couldn't move big objects she could move more than one small object at once and she could aim damn well if she needed to. Izuku had been helping with her quirk training, the dear. For the longest time Inko had been afraid to use her quirk around her son. It felt like she was rubbing his face in the fact that he didn't have one. But they'd talked since then and he actually told her that had just made him feel more guilty. Which in turn made her feel guilty for making him feel guilty. It was a cycle.

They were getting better about that, about communicating and avoiding accidentally hurting each other.

Inko took a knife out of the knife block.

The door opened, “Hey, mom! I got home early!”

And Inko almost breathed a sigh of relief. Almost. But the hair standing on the back of her neck didn’t go down.

Deciding to pretend everything was normal but still holding the knife, Inko reached under the sink and grabbed the cutting board as though this was what she had intended to do all along. It was too early to be making dinner, she’d actually been sitting at the table doing the bills a moment ago, but Izuku didn’t comment on it. She told herself she was overreacting but she wasn’t going to ignore the voice in the back of her head that was telling her something was wrong. If her instincts were wrong she’d calm down in a little bit.

“So, how was your day at school?” she asked carefully menuevering so that she could keep an eye on her son while getting some vegetables out of the fridge.

Izuku shrugged. “Oh, you know the usual. I got a little hurt during hero training but Recovery Girl patched me right up. And I may have seen a villain walking home. But I’m okay. They didn’t stand a chance against me”

Well, that was definitely suspicious. Izuku never spoke so flippantly about villains. He knew it worried her and was usually a subject he avoided bringing up if possible. Usually she had to drag answers out of him, and the whole while he’d be saying he was fine Whoever was possessing, controlling, or pretending to be her son had used an almost teasing tone, like they were making an inside joke.

Just one last question to be sure, “Izuku, did you pick up the eggs?”

The boy blinked and tilted their head to the side. “Ah, sorry, I must have forgotten.”

That wasn't her son.

Ever since he was a child they had a code phrase between them. She would ask if he had picked up eggs and if everything was okay he'd respond 'No problem, mom. Lets get cracking.' in those exact words. If something was wrong he's say, 'Sorry, I accidentally dropped them'. They had a separate set that he asked her and she answered. They even had a code word for if he was approached by strangers who claimed to know her. She'd been told in the past she was being paranoid. Sometimes, they'd use the code phrase when there wasn't a problem and they'd just shoot finger guns at each other. Sometimes, she actually needed eggs.

But in this moment it became worth it.

She whirled on the doppelganger, saw the glint of silver and used her powers and pulled it out of his hand. A scalpel impaled itself in the wood of the floor. Inko held her own knife defensively in front of her. Her mind was going through the different possibilities. Was this someone disguised as her son, or was this someone controlling his body with a quirk. That was the most important question.

They'd talked about villains he had encountered before. There was one who could make an exact copy of someone with a touch. Izuku hadn't interacted enough with them to know the limitations of their powers but apparently the clones were easily dispersed. There was a girl who, with a taste of blood, could disguise herself as a person. He had mentioned that she may have gotten a taste of his blood.

Her mind also tossed in Shinsou-kun even though this was clearly not his work and he wasn't a villain. There were quirks out there similar to his and it was worth acknowledging that someone could be controlling her son that way. Puppeteering somehow.

The Izuku look-a-like laughed and if she had doubts before she didn't anymore. She had never seen that expression on her son's face before.

"You're really cool," they said. "What gave me away?"

"You really think I'm going to tell you how to pretend to be my son better? *Get out of my house* !" Inko growled. For all the times she and Izuka had talked about this situation, Inko

hadn’t expected to feel this pissed.

“Now where’s the fun in that?” the false Izuku cackled. Another knife appeared in their hand, slid from their blazer’s sleeve.

Inko’s mind was running a hundred miles a minute. She could take the knives with her powers but the doppelganger was more likely to be prepared for that now. She couldn’t hurt them seriously without possibly hurting her son. She didn’t have a way of immediately contacting the heroes, though they should be in the neighborhood today. There was no telling how many knives this person had on them, so close combat wasn’t an option.

She had to go on the defensive. She had to knock the doppelganger out. She had to get a heroes attention.

Simple.

Inko screamed in terror as suddenly everything was moving too fast and there was a knife in her arm and the knife she’d been holding dropped to the ground and someone was laughing high pitched and enjoying themselves. The person was in her personal space so even though it went against her original plan Inko tackled them. Apparently, their transformation didn’t change their physical weight because they were a lot lighter than Izuku. That clicked clone or disguise into place in her mind.

They landed on the floor with an omph! Both got the wind knocked out of them. The doppelganger more so because she’s now had the whole of Inko’s weight on her chest. Clumsily, to buy more time, Inko threw a punch at the person’s face. It left her hand hurting and the doppelganger used the moment to put another cut in her arm, but there was a satisfying smack when her fist connected.

Time bought, Inko scrambled off the doppelganger and ran to the living room. Panicking slightly and unwilling to turn her back or give the doppelganger a moments rest, Inko’s quirk started acting on its own and raining down the various kitchen utensils and trinkets on the stranger.

Heart beating fast Inko grabbed the nearest heaviest object that she could lift (a metal lamp) and threw it out the window. It took three tries to get it through as the glass was tougher than it looked. But now someone outside would notice something suspicious was going on!

A scalpel impaled itself in her leg and Inko cried out, dropping to the floor.

The doppelganger slinked up like the cat that ate the canary, a look of sadistic glee on their face. It was a look that didn't fit her son. Blood dripped freely from their nose and they licked their lip to taste it. The disguiser girl then, the one Izuku told her about. She had another knife in her hand faster than Inko could blink and Inko scowled back. She had to buy time! She had to fight!

The glass shards of the window floated up behind her. Inko was overextending her quirk but it was the only option she had. She wondered if this was how Izuku felt before he broke his hand.

"Let me guess," Inko muttered. Need to buy time. Need to buy time. "The League of Villains sends their regards?"

"You guessed it," the doppelganger wore a smile too wide for Izuku's face. "Shigaraki went on and on about sending a message, you know? Just because you got your kids locked up doesn't mean *you're* safe from us. Blah blah blah. Personally I don't really care about all that."

The doppelganger moved closer and Inko sent a few shards of glass towards her. The girl ignored them and kept getting closer. Inko's heart felt like it was going to beat out of her chest. She was going to die. She was going to die!

No! She couldn't! She wasn't going to do that to her son. She needed a plan.

There were several knives dropped on the kitchen floor. If she kept the doppelganger's focus towards her, towards the shards of glass, she could maybe…

“All I care about is having as much fun as possible!” the villain said, getting closer.

The knife moved, but it didn’t float into the air like she wanted to. Inko was sweating. She threw more shards of glass towards the villain. She got a better grip on the knife. The pressure of using her power like this gave her a nose bleed. Inko fiercely grit her teeth.

The doppelganger leaned forward and caught a drop of the blood on her finger and brought it to her mouth. Izuku’s skin bubbled away and transformed her into Inko’s reflection. “And I’m going to have my fun, bleeding every last drop of blood out of you.”

Inko glared up at the woman wearing her skin. “You can fucking try.”

The doppelganger opened her mouth to say something gloatingly back.

But then she wasn’t there anymore.

There was a humongous crash, the shattering of glass and concrete, a rush of wind and suddenly standing in her place was Izuku, the real Izuku, standing with his fists raised, eyes blazing so bright they might have been on fire.

Where there had been a wall and broken window, there was now a giant gaping hole, that would definitely do a better job of attracting the attention of the heroes than her lamp attempt. It was safe to assume that had been where the villain had gone.

“Are you okay, mom?” Izuku asked softly. A chill ran up her spine as she recognized the tone.

“Yeah,” she said. The worst she had was the scalpel in her leg, it was still there and she’d leave it to the doctors to pull out. All her other injuries were glancing cuts, nothing bad enough that couldn’t be patched up with some bandages and maybe a couple of stitches.

Izuku nodded and tossed her his cell phone. “Call the heroes.”

And then he jumped out the hole in their apartment and went after the villain.

Inko cussed and forced herself back onto her feet wincing. She dialed the heroes as she limped towards the front door and down the stairs. She had to stop him, she knew that look. She remembered it.

“Hello?” She said to the operator. “I’m Midoriya Inko, my address should be on record. I’ve been attacked at my home. Please send someone as quickly as possible”

She came around the corner of the house and saw Izuku standing over the villain. She had transformed back into her original form, a young blond woman in twin buns. Her hair had come slightly undone and she was clearly on the losing side of this fight. She was cradling her arm like it was broken but still trying to smile as though she enjoyed the pain.

“You wanted to send a message, right? Wanted me to find her, huh?” Izuku kicked the girl in the stomach. From the way her body flew back he had been using his quirk. “You fuckers are really full of shit, aren’t you?”

Inko dragged herself closer, stifling a whimper of pain. She had to save him before it was too late.

“You want to send a message?” Izuku said sadistically stomping on the girls calf. He was strong enough that her bones shattered. “Then it’s only polite that I send one back.”

Shadows swam at the edge of Inko’s vision. It was too much. It was all too much.

“How bout I break every bone in your body? You’ll probably die of shock after twenty. It’ll be fun!”

Izuku kicked the woman again and she let out a sobbing wail.

Inko could see their faces now. The doppelganger was starting to look desperate, blood was flooding into her left eye and her cheekbone seemed to be broken. She was still trying to smile but she looked like a broken doll.

Izuku was smiling, but it wasn't the smile he'd pinned his dreams on. It wasn't one full of hope and bravery. It was the smile of a predator taking joy in it's kill.

One-for-all blazed around his skin. He clenched his fists preparing a finishing blow.

"Don't worry, Himiko-chan, it won't hurt if you dodge!"

His eyes burned the way they did back then.

When he was seven-years-old Izuku came home one day, strangely quiet. It was the day, Inko later found out, that he realized Katsuki wasn't really his friend anymore.

He refused to talk to her the entire day. He had locked himself in his room and refused to come out. He wouldn't meet her eyes all through dinner and to say she was worried would be an understatement. That evening she managed to slip into his room before he could lock her out.

Inko was determined to get answers and he pouted as she earnestly tried to talk to him.

Then she noticed it. Open on his desk was one of his hero notebooks, the writing hot off the presses. It was an entry on Katsuki. Though it seemed much more detailed… and violent than usual.

“Izuku…” Inko asked softly. “What’s this?”

And finally he looked at her and his eyes were blazing brands in his skull. Not full of the normal tears or fear or innocent hurt but an anger deeper than she believed her son capable of.

“I hate him,” Izuku said quietly. “I hate him. And I hate the bullies and I hate the neighbors and I hate everyone that looks down on me. I hate being quirkless. I hate everyone who hates me *for being quirkless* . I hate all of this.”

He gestured jerkily at himself, but he still spoke almost calmly. It was like he was so angry that tears and shouting weren’t enough. Inko’s heart ached and as usual she didn’t know what to do to help. She opened her arms to offer a hug but he didn’t take it. He just glared up at her with fire in his eyes.

“I want to make them suffer, mom.”

Inko shouted the same thing she said all those years ago.

“A true hero turns their back on hatred, Izuku!”

Her son froze. Back then, she had hugged him. She had spoken gently and talked about philosophy and goodness and how he had to be the bigger person. How even heroes would always have people who hate them. How he couldn’t let their hatred poison him.

Now his eyes still burned and she could only hope that she had reached him.

Izuku stood up straight and in his still bizarrely calm and bitter voice he said, “Kurogiri?”

Inko remembered Izuku mention the villain with the teleportation power. She wondered, if he could kill people so easily with his powers why he hadn't used it to kill anyone yet. He'd had plenty opportunity but as far as she and her son had seen he hasn't used it to split any heroes in two. They'd spent time wondering if her could at all. Inko didn't see the mist man, but like her son she was sure he must be there. It'd have been reckless to send the doppelganger girl alone.

"Tell Shigaraki," Izuku glared straight ahead, dismissing the broken girl. "That touching my mom is an automatic Game Over." A monstrous smile twisted her son's face, "We might already be enemies, but you do not want me to be your *villain* ."

There seemed to be a shift in the pressure of the air. Inko wondered if that was one of the reasons Izuku noticed the villain was there in the first place. The body of the girl sunk into shadow and disappeared. The pressure in the air disappeared, too.

Heroes were now rushing towards them, entirely too late. With a cry Inko fell into her son's arms and they hugged. Safe.

The tension eased out of his shoulders and he cried too. Safe, whole, scared, and every bit the bravest little boy she knew.

He was still her hero.

Chapter End Notes

-I'm really proud of this one
-all their code phrases are egg based. when things are okay, they use it as an excuse to make a ton of egg puns.
-Since they live in the same area, Katsuki was home that weekend, but he and his parents had gone out to eat so they missed all of this. If he was there Bakugou would have joined the fray.
-Himiko still likes Midoriya after this.
-Midoriya is still mad
-Midoriya really needs to stop imitating Kacchan. It's getting unhealthy.

Midoriya: if anything happens to my mom I will kill everyone in this room and then myself
1-a: same
Me: same
The person reading this: same

His Little Secrets

Chapter by serenawitchwriter

Chapter Summary

Uraraka does some digging.

Chapter Notes

screams at the void this chapter was aggressively hard to write. take it and let me die

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Uraraka liked to think Deku was as honest with her as she was with him.

She liked to believe it, but for one thing:

“I’m fine,” Deku said brushing her and Iida off.

“Are you sure?” Uraraka said for what felt like the millionth time. Because she knew he wasn't fine. He was lying. He was a dirty liar! His pants were going to burn!

“Uraraka,” Deku said in an exasperated tone. Normally at this point she would drop it, because she was his friend and she liked to respect his boundaries but this was getting ridiculous.

“No, Deku, you aren’t fine,” she huffed. “Your mom was attacked at home by the League of Villains. She was literally stabbed with knives and if you hadn’t gotten home when you did a lot worse could have happened. Normal people aren’t fine after stuff like that. You are not fine, Deku!”

Midoriya winced. “When you say it like that it sounds kind of bad.”

“It is bad!” Uraraka snapped frustrated.

Iida sighed loudly. “Midoriya, I know that you must be angry, but bottling it up isn’t healthy. You told me yourself that seeking the comfort of friends and their help is the healthiest way to deal with these emotions. You know you can come to us.”

Midoriya’s eyes turned watery. “I know,” he said looking between the two of them, “Thank you, I appreciate you two so much!”

He was crying full force now and of course that made Uraraka cry too because goshdarnit tears were contagious and she loved her best friend and she appreciated him too! Even Iida started to look foggy eyed and they all hugged and cared about each other. It was great.

It wasn’t until later that Uraraka realized that Deku hadn’t actually talked about his problems.

Oh boy.

Oh boy, was he in trouble.

“I just want to know why he won’t come to us!” Uraraka growled at the lunch table later that day. Deku was obviously avoiding her and had gone to sit with Shinsou and Kouda at their sign language speaking table. He kept shooting her anxious looks when he thought she wasn’t looking, but she *saw him* . He wasn’t slick.

“To be fair, you look like you’re going to skin him alive,” Tsuyu said, not really helping.

“I only want to skin him alive because he keeps lying! If he confronted his problems head on we wouldn’t have a problem!” Uraraka gestured widely with her chopsticks and accidentally got rice all over the table. Iida was quick to scold her but his speech was background noise by now.

“To my knowledge, Midoriya only lies when he’s protecting someone else’s secret,” Todoroki said walking up and placing his lunch tray down on the table.

Uraraka made eye contact with him.

Todoroki froze. Then he turned and started power-walking out of the cafeteria.

Uraraka bolted after him screaming the words, “What do you know!?”

Todoroki started running.

“WHAT DO YOU KNOW!?”

Todoroki was a faster runner than her in general but he sucked going around corners and Uraraka was gaining. It helped that people were quick to get out of her way.

Uraraka took a flying frog leap (a move that Tsuyu taught her) and landed on Todoroki’s back. Her initial attempt to wrestle him to the ground failed because apparently she was too light to even slow his running down. She’d take that as a complement, but that wasn’t the point. Uraraka slapped him and abruptly they stopped moving forward. Todoroki’s feet kept moving but he remained floating stationary in the air.

“Really?” Todoroki said dryly and he stopped moving completely.

“He lies for you,” Uraraka said. It wasn’t a question.

Todoroki sighed like he was already tired of this conversation.. “Even if he did, a secret is a secret because you don’t tell anyone what it is.”

“Not even one of your bestest friends in the whole world?”

“You think I consider you one of my best friends in the whole world?” Todoroki asked coldly.

“Ouch,” Uraraka said, genuinely kinda hurt.

There was a pause as Todoroki seemed to consider something, then he sighed again. “Put me down.”

Uraraka pouted, or continued to pout, she didn’t know when exactly she had begun. But released her quirk. To her great surprise he didn’t immediately drop her to the floor like a sack of potatoes and instead continued to carry her piggy back style to an empty classroom. Uraraka had to admire how far he’s come from the beginning of the school year. She was pretty sure, Todoroki wouldn’t have let her touch him, let alone be willing to carry her anywhere outside of a professional capacity.

He gently let her off on a desk. Then he turned and froze the lock of the door. Then he finally faced her. “Look,” he said, looking what passed as anxious for him. “You are someone I consider a friend. A close friend. It’s just… difficult for me to talk about things. Midoriya was a special circumstance and Yaoyoroza figured things out on her own. So… I don’t know.”

Todoroki seemed to lose track of his thoughts.

Uraraka frowned. “I wasn’t trying to dig into your secrets or anything,” she said suddenly feeling guilty. “I just want to know why Midoriya lies so often.”

Todoroki glanced away. “Well… I don’t know everything. Just that he’ll lie for me and protects my secrets. I assume he does the same for others.”

Uraraka hummed thoughtfully.

“But that doesn’t explain why he always says he’s fine when he’s not,” she decided. “If he keeps your secrets, does he go to you with his own?”

Todoroki blinked slightly surprised and then got a considering look. “No… not often.”

Uraraka waited for him to elaborate. He didn’t. She sighed and leaned back her head so it did her patented floaty thing. “Thanks anyway, Todoroki. I’ll figure this out.”

Uraraka went for the door and realized it was still frozen shut. She turned to give Todoroki a look and found that his mouth was open as if he was about to say something. When she caught him he shut his mouth and looked away embarrassed.

“Have you ever heard of quirk marriages?” he said, transitioning terribly to another subject.

Well that was enlightening, Uraraka thought bitterly. She and Todoroki had pretty much completely missed lunch. She was going to somehow find a way to murder Endeavor when she got the chance, so that new grudge was going to be fun to live with. At least Todoroki said there was a police investigation open.

Hmm… Todoroki needed a nickname so she wouldn’t have to call him the same name as his father. She could just call him Shouto, she supposed. It was his hero name and she always called Deku Deku. Would that just establish her as someone who calls people by their hero names? But she didn’t have permission to casually call him Shouto. How did that work? Does the fact that it was his hero name count as permission? She should just come up with something more personal. Something creative.

She wasn't very creative with names though, she usually just piggybacked off of other people's nicknames or went the most obvious route of shortening or making a pun

"Oh!" Uraraka was literally knocked from her thoughts as she ran into someone. She fell on her but and ended up staring up the tall, skinny figure of small might. It was still so odd to see him look so emaciated. She'd grown up with Muscle Man Mcgee, it was weird translating the in to skinny man, even if she had seen the news broadcast of what happened to him more than once. "Sorry."

"It's okay, young Uraraka," all might said pulling her to her feet. "We both weren't looking where we were going. Well off you go."

And he kept walking. He still talked the same way huh and he still acted kinda cute even though it was a bit weirder looking with his spider limps. He still had that positive kinda energy. Uraraka remembered when he asked Deku to lunch with his cute little bento. WAIT! HE ASKS DEKU TO LUNCH SOMETIMES!

"ALL MIGHT!" Uraraka shouted running after the teacher. She skidded around the corner and caught he turned to blink at her.

"Yes…?"

"Did Deku know about your Small Might form before you permanently ended up as Small Might? Was that why you were so close and nice to him? Because his fluffy hair holds secrets!?"

All Might tensed "I'm sure I have no idea what you're talking about."

Oh my god! For someone who's kept his quirk a secret for his entire career he was an awful liar. Maybe he's good at those other things, misdirection? Lying by omission? One of those.

"So do you know why Deku is lying all the time? Why is he so secretive?"

All Might immediately looked uncomfortable and coughed a little blood. Uraraka, immediately felt guilty. “I assure you, Uraraka, that even if Midoriya and I have secrets, I wouldn’t be at liberty to discuss them.”

“Secrets- like there are more secrets than your Small Might form!?” Uraraka spoke a little too loudly and they were starting to get looks from people in the hall.

“Now, now,” All Might said waving her off, “I assure you you’re jumping to conclusions young student. Perhaps you should get to class now.”

Uraraka winced again. “Sorry, sir,” she was definitely overreacting. “I’m not asking because I want to know you or Midoriya’s secrets. That would be rude and I’m sure if you want to keep something secret you have a good reason.”

He was the former- no wait Endeavor didn’t count- he was the number one hero. The skeleton’s in his closet were probably important. it was better if she didn’t touch them.

“Apology accepted,” All Might said putting a hand gently on her head and ruffling her hair. Oh crap he probably messed it up. She’d need to borrow a brush from Momo to fix it. “I know how excitable you kids are today.”

Dammit, she couldn’t even be mad because All Might was just so earnest and cute.

“Okay,” Uraraka said trying to get her thoughts straight. “But can you at least tell me if Deku comes to you with his emotional problems? I’ve- all of us have been pretty worried, especially after Friday and it just seems like… he’s been really cagey. I mean he cried and hugged us but he doesn’t actually say anything.”

All Might paused and frowned. He opened his mouth, then he closed it again. He went three cycles of opening and closing his mouth like a fish and then finally he said, “No… no, I suppose he hasn’t talked to me about his emotional issues.”

And he looked almost upset about that realization.

“Well,” All Might said after a moment of consideration. “He’s always been rather resilient. I’m sure he’ll be fine.”

Uraraka bit her lip because that didn’t sound like the right answer.

“You better get to class, Miss Uraraka,” All Might said patting her lightly on the shoulder.

Not knowing what else to say, Uraraka did what he told her to, though she felt distracted for the day.

Uraraka knew she was staring a hole in the back of Bakugou’s head but he was the only other person she knew who might know what’s up with Deku. Sure, they weren’t really friends anymore but they were always in each others orbit and the way Deku talk she could tell that he understood how Bakugou thinks and sometimes Bakugou had weird moments of doing the same thing. So maybe he knew what was going on with Deku.

If he didn’t, he at least was in the neighborhood when the villain attack happened or he might have Midoriya’s mom’s phone number.

Her staring was making Bakugou gradually more agitated throughout the day. She pursed her lips and considered how she was gonna do this. Chances are he was gonna explode at her before she could get him alone. When the bell rang she jumped from her seat and rushed through the door, knowing he would follow her.

She was right.

Her day ended up involving a lot of running.

She saw a closet. Victory! She turned into it and hoped to god what Deku said about Nedzu locking people in closets when need to talk was true.

"Get back here, Angel Face," Bakugou shouted. Uraraka skidded past the door a little and stumbled her way through it. Bakugou wasn't far after her and oh these closets were pretty big, nice.

"Why the fuck were you staring at me," Bakugou growled. The closet door clicked closed behind him, sealing their fate.

"I wanted to talk to you," Uraraka said simply.

Bakugo scowled. "So you led me to a closet? Who does that?"

He turned to leave and found the door locked. Yay! Nedzu came through, the weirdo.

"It locks automatically," Uraraka filled him in. "Nedzu will unlock it when he notices we're here."

Bakugou turned and glowered at her. "You're telling me you *planned* this?"

Uraraka shrunk back, regret immediately hitting. Maybe locking herself in a closet with the class resident crazy person wasn't such a great idea. But she was pretty sure he wouldn't actually kill her. Probably.

"I figured you wouldn't want to be seen being nice or helpful in public and this is the only way I could think of to get you alone."

Bakugou jiggled the door knob one last time and then turned and crossed his arms over his chest. "You could have just asked me."

Uraraka gave him a skeptical look. “Have you met Mina?”

As much as she loved the girl, she was an undeniable gossip, with a penchant for saying the weirder ‘news’ like it was the truth.she was a bit of a conspiracy nut. The moment Uraraka approached she’d be spinning tales of their tragic romance as star crossed lovers. Uraraka didn’t feel like dealing with that today.

“And it would be so much better if she found out we were locked in a closet alone together,” Bakugou said with an exaggerated eye roll.

“Well, considering you chased me in here wearing your murder face, I figured people would just assume you were trying to kill me.”

“Don’t think that’s off the table, round cheeks.” Bakugou barked. He was a bit like an aggressive Pomeranian sometimes. Only with the power to blow things up. Not as cute as he could be to be honest. He’d have more potential if his personality wasn’t a train wreck that just kept crashing.

“So anyway, my question,” Uraraka said staying on task. “According to Todoroki, Deku only lies when it’s for other people, right? And he seems to lie a lot for you too. So what i want to know is why he can’t talk to his friends about his feelings? Who is he lying for when he says he’s fine?”

Bakugou stared at her lie she was stupid for a long moment. “Are you fucking kidding me? You locked me in a closet for *this* bullshit?”

“It’s important!” Uraraka said earnestly. “It seems like he’s bottling things up and that can’t be healthy. I wanna help him. You don’t have to tell me what your secrets are, you just have to help me help him.”

“Secrets? This was never about secrets. I mean, yeah, he fucking has them. Fuck I mean he has a lot of them, way more than I even have the right to know about, not that I care.”

“Then why does he really lie? Who is he protecting?”

“You don’t get it!” Bakugou snapped. “He’s not a liar because he’s some pure little savior, defending others and taking their secrets to the grave. He’s a fucking liar because he just fucking hates asking for help and is too much of a coward to admit that he’s weak even when everyone and their mother can see it!”

Her thoughts must have shown on her face because Bakugou went on louder and more defensively.

“This isn’t about my own flaws, bitch, and if you’d seen Deku growing up, you’d know what I mean. Basically every adult within ten miles of our house treated him like he was made out of glass or some shit. Everything was about him being quirkless this or helpless that. It was kinda sick in hindsight. He was the fucking baby and every just loved him or pitied him and if he needed help they would fall at his feet to give it to him. But that was the fucking problem, wasn’t it? They weren’t helping him because he was a fucking kid that needed help, they were helping him because he was the stupid fucking quirkless kid. If he couldn’t do something, it was because he was quirkless. If he didn’t know something and he asked a question then the teachers would explain things ten times slower so his stupid ass could understand it. Even if he wasn’t fucking stupid, even if he were asking smarter questions than anyone else in our fucking school. It was disgusting. So rather than bask in all the attention he got, he spat on it and decided he didn’t need them or there pity.”

Bakugou’s expression was doing an interesting dance between irritable scowling and begrudging respect. It was like he wanted to be angry but was reconsidering things on the fly and hated that he was reconsidering things so he was angry about that. He seemed conflicted.

Or maybe he had to poop.

“So what you’re saying is,” Uraraka tried to keep her thoughts in order. “Deku hates asking for help because people only ever helped him out of pity?”

“That is literally what i just fucking said!” Bakugou immediately grabbed onto the opportunity to bite her head off. Good old, Bakugou. She might not like him but at least he

was predictable.

“And he lies, to avoid getting help,” Uraraka frowned feeling a pang of sadness. “But what about his mom, couldn’t he trust her to-”

“Have you met his mom?” Bakugou scoffed. “She has worse anxiety than he does. He spends more times making sure *she’s* okay, than she does him and, believe me, that’s saying something.”

“But she’s his mom, isn’t she the one supposed to be taking care of him?”

“You think she’s not!?” Bakugou said looking abnormally offended. “She’s a fucking single mother, who’s had to put up with Deku’s bullshit his entire fucking life. Alone. While also maintaining a job. Auntie Inko is a fucking badass so fuck off.”

“I’m just saying that he’s seemed to take on an unhealthy amount of responsibility, too,” Uraraka tried to appease him.

“Well, no shit. He has a fucking martyr's complex. That fucker has apologized for fucking bleeding. He cried when I killed a bloody earthworm. Of course he has no idea what a healthy amount of responsibility is. He’s never known his own limits. That’s his whole problem.”

Uraraka looked at the ground.

She couldn’t say he was wrong.

She ended up hunting Aizawa down after much sighing and consideration in the dorm common room. Thankfully Iida was on concerned hovering duty because she wasn’t sure she could properly be around Deku without confronting him and maybe yelling and shaking him. Someone needed to knock sense into that hard head of his, but at the same time that might not help him.

Aizawa was the answer. He always seemed to have the answers. He was reliable like that. He would help.

But now that she was in his office standing there, under his scarily perceptive gaze she was internally panicking.

What if this was the wrong choice? What if she was betraying Deku's trust or something? What if Deku finds out she talked with him and ended their friendship? Oh god! What if she just ruined everything and destroyed one of her closest friends/what if Deku came to hate her!?

"Uraraka." Aizawa said flatly. He had the why are you wasting my time face.

"I think Deku needs therapy."

There it was! Like ripping off a plaster. There.

Aizawa-sensei stared at her for one long moment then groaned and put his face in his hands. "I'm not at liberty to discuss that," he said, staring at her through his fingers like she was the only sane person in the world. "A students medical and psychological treatment is private by law."

Uraraka blinked for a moment. "Oh"

"If there is anything that makes concerned or uncomfortably you can tell me. Or if you think Midoriya is in any danger, to himself or others, i do recommend you tell me or a counselor or a teacher you trust."

Uraraka bit her lip. Geez, he wasn't making it any easier, huh? She felt like a narc. "It's nothing that serious. I'm just worried about him and… he doesn't talk to anyone. Not really.

I’m scared for him.”

Aizawa nodded. “Have you talked to him about this?”

Uraraka seesawed her hand. “Kinda, he’s cagey and i’ve only gotten closer to the root of the problem.”

“The root to the problem?”

Uraraka shrugged, uncomfortably. Aizawa was still staring at him with his piercing eyes. “He’s scared of rejection.”

Aizawa hummed in a way that told her nothing.

“Can you talk to him?” Uraraka asked quietly.

Aizawa nodded. “I recommend you do the same.”

Deku was in the common room when she got back he had a laptop in front of him and a focused expression on his face.

“Hey, Deku,” she said tiredly. She wasn’t sure she was up to having a confrontation right now. “What are you up to?”

“Just some extracurricular stuff,” Deku shrugged. He looked tired too.

“Double murder?” Uraraka read over his shoulder, eyebrows drawing together.

Deku quickly slammed his laptop shut. “Don’t worry about it!” he said waving his hands anxiously, in a way that didn’t make her not worry about it. “What were you up to?”

Uraraka, who also admittedly wasn’t a very good liar, waved her hands back. “Oh nothing! Just getting some fresh air!”

Deku, bless his dense trusting heart, believed her anyway. They ended up giggling at the way they kinda mirror each other’s body language. Some tension Uraraka was feeling went out of her. Really, things couldn’t be so bad if they could still laugh right?

She’d talk to him about her worries later. Tomorrow hopefully. Everything would be fine.

“You okay, Uraraka?” Deku asked breaking her from her thoughts.

“I’m fine.”

Chapter End Notes

this is setting up some plot chapters, but i am too tired to deal with those right now so we'll have some fluffier ones for a few

-Todoroki and Uraraka are my brotp
-Bakugou is further along in his character development in this fic, which takes place nebulously post cannon time period. He’s still figuring things out but he’s not as bad as he used to be
-he also still respects (fears) Midorimom
-the 'apologizing for bleeding' is based on a true story where i apologized to a nurse for bleeding on her and the sheets even though the nurse was the reason i was bleeding in the first place. i was really disoriented at the time but it's a mood.
-someone give me a nickname for Shouto that Uraraka would use. right now i'm leaning towards Shochan but i think we can do better

i made a discord btw: https://discord.gg/4udpQWC

Are You Trying to Get Yourself Killed?

Chapter by serenawitchwriter

Chapter Summary

Recovery Girl discovers one of Midoriya's older wounds.

Chapter Notes

I meant to post a lighter chapter but guess which chapter I finished first.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Sorry,” a sheepish Midoriya said. Recovery Girl scowled at his injured arm and chest. It was an explosion this time, courtesy of that Bakugou boy, who’d sent far too many students her way in her opinion.

“I don’t need your apologies, young man,” Recovery Girl snapped irritably. “I need you to start taking care of yourself already. It’s bad enough that I have to worry about All Might. I don’t need your bleeding heart added to my conscious.”

“I know,” Midoriya said looking repentant enough. One of the difficulties of scolding him was that he always managed to look like a kicked puppy when it happened. She knew him and his type well enough to recognize, that he was generally sorry that he injured himself post injury. But she also knew him well enough to know that he’s never sorry about the action that lead up to him getting hurt. He would always injure himself to help another person. Heroes were stupid like that, at least the real ones.

“Look at me,” Recovery Girl called his attention to her. “You need to understand that I’m not always going to be here to heal you. Soon your injuries are going to have to heal normally. And then you’ll be stuck in casts for two to six months or worse in a hospital bed with internal bleeding or who knows what else. I’ve told you before that you can’t carry on like this but I don’t think you’re fully grasping what I mean.”

There it is. The kicked puppy look. At least he seems genuinely upset that she was going to die one day soon. He was a sweet, caring boy she knew. He was just impossibly frustrating.

"I don't try to be like this…" he said softly. Almost like his recklessness was just as much of a mystery to him as it was to her.

Recovery Girl snorted and plopped heavily into her chair. "It's like you think your life is worthless or something," she said resigned and tired.

And the old women saw, to her surprise, something click into place in the boy's eyes. He sat up straighter as though he'd just had a ground-breaking realization. "It's not." he said in wonder.

Recovery Girl blinked at him. She was too old for this shit. "You're only now realizing your life is worth something?"

The boy was starting to vibrate with excitement. "I just- I never thought- no one's ever- well except for mom but she's kinda obligated to- and I suppose more people do now- but it never occured to me-"

"Mr. Midoriya," the old woman cut in, just wanting him to get to the point.

" *You* don't think I'm worthless!" Midoriya said as though it was the first time he'd ever heard anyone say such a thing. Stars sparkled in his big green eyes and Recovery Girl resisted the urge to scowl back at him.

"No, I don't," Recovery Girl says a little more sharply than she means to. "I'd assume most people don't."

And Midoriya lets out a laugh with a startling undercurrent of cynicism. A laugh that says he thinks she's wrong. "More people than before," he grins, and he looks at her with his big green eyes and says a completely genuine, "Thank you, Recovery Girl."

She just nods, and sends him back out with a healing kiss and some bandages, mind lingering on that laugh. On his complete surprise. She goes to her small office area and starts preparing some tea. Her mind goes over their conversation several times until she finally settled into her chair, cup of tea in her hand.

"He really thought he was worthless," She said to her reflection in the drink, with a quiet kind of horror.

Midoriya acted as though she had lifted an old weight off his shoulders, a weight so old that he'd forgotten it was there, a weight so old that he had just accepted that it was part of him. It was so much a part of him that Recovery Girl hadn't even noticed it was there, something darker and heavier then she had ever imagined. She had just blamed it on his self-sacrificial streak. But he… he really didn't understand what he was worth.

That kind of weight doesn't come out of nowhere. It's never something anyone chooses. People put that weight on him. So many people did that he fooled himself into believing it was normal.

He was just a child.

He was just a *goddamn* child!

Recovery Girl wiped the tears off her face and took a sip of her bitter tea. Lost in her thoughts she had forgotten to add sugar. The old woman shook herself from her bitter reverie. The world was cruel. She already knew this.

Apparently Midoriya knew it too.

Chapter End Notes

Huzzah! Character Development!

Masters of Horror

Chapter by serenawitchwriter

Chapter Summary

The class tells horror stories!

Chapter Notes

this was probably more fun to write than it will be to read. Mind the tags, i've published horror stories professionally before so this might scary for some.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Sero *loved* horror movies. To the point where most people found him creepy. He didn't entirely understand why it was creepy. It wasn't like the horror was real. The effects were always obvious, the plots were usually contrived to the point of being hilarious, and he was almost always aware of the fourth wall. If it was scary enough to disturb him or suspend his disbelief than it was a bloody good film and he could admire it for that.

Sero also loved the psychology of it all. Understanding what made murderers tick was interesting. There was so much to learn about them, from them. What made someone decide to murder another person? What kind of techniques do real killers use to trap and manipulate you? How to build rapport? How to win against killers?

He didn't see how that made him creepy but he'd long accepted that his love of horror would forever be seen as part of his supposed bondage kink. Which he didn't have by the way! Just because tape came out of his body and he tied people up a lot didn't mean he found anything sexually arousing about the situation. It was literally just the power he was born with!

He'd accepted that bondage thing was a losing battle though. Denial didn't change people's minds.

Where was he?

Oh. yeah, horror movies. Anyway he was determined to inflict his taste on his classmates at tonight's movie night. It was his turn to pick and he was going to make the most of it!

…then the support department blew out the power.

Sometimes it felt like the whole world was against him. Sero considered himself a good person. He did his best to help people. He shared his muffin with a homeless person once. He tolerated Bakugou. What did he do to deserve this?

They were all already in the common room anyway. When the lights went out, ironically some people screamed even though they'd faced a lot worse things than a dark room. It took a while before everyone calmed down and their eyes adjusted. It was also a while before Sero got over his silent praying and cursing. But Mina saved the day.

"Ooohhhh we should tell ghost stories."

Thank you god! And thank you, Mina. The class made various noises of reluctance or agreement.

"Well we never did get to complete our test of courage during the school camping trip," Kirishima grinned. "It can be like a contest! Whoever tells the scariest story wins!"

Sero could kiss Kirishima right now, that beautiful son of a gun!

"I don't know," Iida said, the spoil sport. "I know it would normally be a movie night but we still have to be careful about curfew. I don't want anyone to get scared and stay up too late."

"But we'll be able to conserve energy by just lighting the common room instead of every dorm room," Uraraka pointed out, the sweetest of bros.

“And I’m sure the teachers would want as to stay together until things are fixed,” Shinsou said quietly. God, Sero loved that creepy new kid.

“Well…” Iida hesitated. “Okay, just so long as we remember to get in by curfew.”

Hell yeah!

Sero was gradually disappointed by his classmates ability to tell horror stories. It became quickly apparent that no one was as big of fans as he.

Bakugou did okay, he was very descriptive about the gore but his stories had toi many explosions and frankly got less realistic the more he talked. It was almost funny actually, which wasn’t the point of telling horror stories.

Mina did okay, but she told a urban legend that Sero had heard before told better. Sero could tell that she was only half remembering it. But she was enthusiastic and that counted for something.

Tokiyama was way too melodramatic but he tried really hard so Sero would give him points for that.

Shinsou, who Sero has unofficially adopted as his son, did a good job. He told a creepy pasta that Sero had also heard before. But his slow, gruff way of speaking and his creepy smile added to the overall atmosphere of the room. Sero was proud of new kid for doing so well.

Everyone else was kind of pathetic. Kirishima wouldn’t stop smiling and bouncing, and told his story more like a little toddler trying to tell a ghost story than a teenage taking things seriously.

Kami lost track of his story halfway through and abruptly ended with the words, ‘and they all died’. It was a rip off.

Iida didn’t even try. It was like he’d never heard a horror story in his life. He seemed scared of the other stories though so he got points for being a good audience member.

Good audience member points also went to Midoriya, Kouda, Uraraka and Aoyama.

Yoayaroza tried very hard but clearly didn’t have a good story. She used too many big words and kept stuttering. It was cute for what it was but not scary.

They still had a lot of storytellers to go and Sero was going to rock their worlds when it was his turn. But he was getting a little depressed.

Next was Midoriya. He was flinchy and stressed through the other stories, so he while he was a good audience enough member, Sero doubted he was a fan of horror. He also kept muttering to himself which was pretty creepy. So at least he knew how to add to the atmosphere.

The little green-haired cutie shifted to the center of their circle, after muttering to the person sitting next to him for a moment.

“Well,” Midoriya said nervously. “I have a few good stories actually. They’re not really ghost stories, though. They’re true.”

Bakugou scoffed, as their one true skeptic. “Oh please, are you really going to play the ‘it’s a true story’ bullshit? Are you trying to be the most cliche asshole here? Like Shitty Hair wasn’t bad enough.”

Midoriya blinked innocently at him, he green eyes shining in the candlelight. “But they are true stories, Kacchan. You know how I like to do quirk analysis. That involves a lot of research into true crime. Human villains are a lot scarier than ghosts.”

Ohhhhhhh!!! Sero found himself leaning in thoroughly intrigued now. He wasn't the only one. Midoriya seemed to get everyone's attention with the promise of true crime. Though if he told his story the way he talked quirk analysis there might be a bit of a problem

"Well... I guess I'll go with one that's rather infamous. Have you ever heard of the Fujikawaguchiko massacre?"

Most people in the room looked unsure or shook their heads but several looked uncomfortable.

"Are you sure you want to tell that one, Midoriya?" Yoayaroza said looking rather pale. "It's very dark and... well it might be a bit uncouth to use it just to win a contest."

Midoriya shook his head. "I don't really care about the contest." he rubbed the back of his neck. "I just never get to talk about this kind of thing. I actually know a lot about the case."

"And people still haven't figured out you're a creepy bastard?" Bakugou snorted.

"I'm sorry, but what's that Fujikawaguchiko massacre?" Kirishima asked looking more serious than usual.

"It was a massacre in Fujikawaguchiko, presumably." Tsuyu said matter-of-factly.

Bakugou scowled at her. "Jesus, do you guys even read or watch the news? It's really fucking famous It's not just any fucking massacre. It's regarded as one of the most violent villain victories in human history and to make matters worse the villain fucking got away. Everything that could go wrong went wrong on that fucking case. It was awful."

Hearing Bakugou call something awful and genuinely mean it was sort of intimidating. Sero could vaguely remember hearing about the massacre, either in a book or on tv. He couldn't

remember much of the details though. The fact that it seemed to bother Bakugou though, probably meant that it was worse than he remembered.

“My mom lived a town over from Fujikawaguchiko when she was a kid. She’s mentioned it to me before,” Uraraka said, looking bothered. “It was a pretty big deal. Everyone was terrified. The city was crawling with heroes and people were still afraid to go outside. I can’t imagine what it was like.”

“Well perhaps we should get into it,” Midoriya said rather eagerly. “I think the best place to start would be when the first body was found. Shiro Yamada and his girlfriend Souh Hinata were hiking one of the trails in the Aokigahara forest preserve when they smelled something rotting and convinced it was one of the legendary ‘hanging corpses’ of the suicide forest, Shiro left the trail to investigate, leaving his girl friend by the path so she could call him back in case he got lost. He didn’t find a suicide victim though instead he found the mangled corpse of Isashi Kori a missing grade schooler from the nearby town.

“Shiro remembers smelling it first. He described it as being awful, the sick scent of infection and feces undercut by the disgustingly sweet mealy scent of rotten flesh. He saw her backpack through the trees. It was a bright blue thing patterned with clouds, it was mentioned as one of the last things she was wearing. Shiro moved through the trees and there she was.

“She was much smaller that he would have thought… there wasn’t any pale skin or empty eyes to be seen. It was too late for that. By the time she was found carrion and other wild life had already gotten to her and began eating her desiccated corpse. She was covered in flies and maggots. The smell was the worse here and Shiro vomited off to the side. She was so small. She was so much smaller than a little girl even should be and she was red. Just… completely red.

“She was pinned to a tree with two knives through either shoulder. Most of her body had slipped to the ground as she decayed but her head was still up there. A head with pale Blue hair just like her backpack.”

Sero didn’t know he was holding his breath until Bakugou broke the tension by saying, “What the fuck, Deku?”

Midoriya seemed to come out of the trance he was in. He'd spoken the way he does when he's in analysis mode, focused, eyes distant, but he'd also spoken with such emotion, as though he were really there looking at the body.

"What?" he said sounding more present.

"How… just what the fuck?'

Midoriya seemed to understand what Bakugou was asking in the way only Midoriya could. "I was quoting the witness mostly, he clarified. I've seen crime scene photos though. It was… it was bad."

"The police released those photos to the public?" Yoayaroza asked with soft horror and slight disgust.

Midoriya shifted uncomfortable "Ah… no, they didn't."

"Then how-"

"Shiro called the police and park rangers, of course," Midoriya uncharacteristically cut her off. "They came up determined that it was Isashi. Marked the area she'd been there a little over a week. She'd been killed with a knife. Stabbed fifteen times in the chest and neck. It was a messy job according to the ME not a professional job by their standards. Her body had also been moved to the woods.

"Considering there were other children missing the police decided it was likely that the others might be found in the woods, so they called a search party. There had been no witnesses to the abduction. No evidence as far as they could see. Even with the body there was not forensic evidence that they could find. There was a possible footprint in the dirt but it was corrupted by one of the park rangers so it had to be thrown out."

Bakugou snorted, "Of fucking course."

“But the biggest break they got was a letter they received the day the body was found. Not by mail, no fingerprints, an identifiable handwriting but they had nothing to match it against. It arrived on the police chiefs desk. No one had seen who put it their. The footage of the station showed a civilian enter the station, someone no one remembers but they didn’t get a clean visual of him. They knew he was wearing jeans, a blue t-shirt and a hiking backpack. It was all circumstantial.

“The letter said, ‘I will kill one citizen for everyday you don’t catch me. Come find me’.”

Iida drew a hiss of a breath.

“That’s crazy,” Kirishima said softly.

Midoriya shrugged. “They found the next body while canvassing the woods. Yuuri Tomei. Another grade schooler. The had a officially had a serial killer on their hands. This one was also pinned to a tree. They were forming a pattern. The next three bodies were found in a similar fashion.”

Midoriya heaved a sad sigh, “The police was pressed for time, they didn’t want to reveal too much evidence of cause the public to panic but it was quickly becoming apparent that the killer meant what they said in the letter. Moreover they were getting better, more efficient, graduating to adults and teenagers. They called the heroes in of course. It didn’t work. They had evidence but it wasn’t connecting to anything. Whoever their killer was wasn’t in the system. Evidence was handled clumsily or kept going missing. They caught who they thought was the killer on street cameras but it was never a clear enough shot to identify them.

“By day five they were starting to panic. A villain warning went out for the area. There wasn’t really any rhyme or reason to who he chose to kill, only that they were in Fujikawaguchiko. So anyone could be in danger people were warned to be wary of strangers, to not go out alone. That didn’t stop the murders from happening, some were murdered in their own homes and moved to the forest. They had crime scenes they had blood, they had skin samples, they had fingerprints, they were sure that some of his victims fought back but strangely they had no witnesses.”

That drew a few blinks. Sero was the one to voice the question. “How do you murder five people and not have any witnesses? How do you move five bodies and not be seen?”

Sero shot a look around their huddled group and everyone seemed just as invested as he was. Some looked more afraid than others.

“Well that’s the mystery,” Midoriya said, clearly. “There were some reports but none of them panned out. All they had was circumstantial evidence. The heroes looked for suspects, but they had nothing. They had leads but they didn’t go anywhere and meanwhile for all the time they wasted more and more people were dying.

“Week three a hero was killed, the Mirage Hero: Will-O-Wisp. That’s when things got personal for the heroes. The patrols got more intense and more violent. There was a crack down on the gang violence and against the homeless. All the suspects they brought in didn’t match DNA wise so they had to be set free.”

Midoriya shook his head. “Almost like a joke on the killer’s part the people they released were murdered so after. That was around the time they started looking for subject internally. They figured with all the evidence tampering, the fact that someone got that letter on the chief's desk, maybe the killer was a police officer. Pointing fingers at each other didn’t help though. It only threw the case into more chaos.”

“So how did they find him in the end?” Kaminari asked an intense look on his face.

Midoriya blinked, again as though he were coming out of a trance. “Didn’t you hear Kacchan? They didn’t.”

“What do you mean they didn’t?” Kaminari was staring at Midoriya in slight fear.

“They never found the killer,” Midoriya said, matter-of-factly. “He killed every person that remained in town. Around the twentieth body, people started moving but over the next two years he emptied the town completely.”

“Wha- you’re kidding right,” Mina scoffed a little. “He couldn’t actually- I mean they had all those people looking. Heroes. No one found him in two *years?”*

“No,” Midoriya said blankly.

“Oh… oh my,” Iida said softly.

Some of the details of the case was coming back to Sero. He remembered hearing about it. He thinks it was related to some kind of urban legend… what was it....?

“Well, as you expect there was a lot of public outcry against the police force and the heroes who were failing to capture this violence. He stayed rather consistent in attack. There was some actual signs of fights, when the heroes were killed off. No witness still. So it’s theorized that that’s what the killers quirk could do but that was dismissed. After all, how could this serial killer defeat professional heroes if they don’t have an offensive quirk?” Midoriya gave a surprisingly dismissive laugh. “Either way, the body count was getting higher, and in theory the evidence was rising but the public weren’t seeing results.

“Can you imagine what it must have been like to live in that town? To know that someone in your community was systematically killing people off. That any moment you could be murdered and it didn’t matter who you were, how old young were, how rich you were, how powerful you were. The murderer killed indiscriminately. And continued to drag the bodies to the woods to pin them to trees. It was… knives had been stolen from the police lock up and were reused to pin people to trees. The share variety in knives he used was actually interesting. He’d stolen knives directly from people's houses. People you knew were dying, people’s children or parents. And the police were proving helpless.

“Can you imagine, watching your neighbors pick up and leave out of fear? Can you imagine being one of the stragglers and knowing that you can be next? Can you imagine how over night your shiny little resort town becoming a ghost town? Fujikawaguchiko hasn’t been repopulated since then. I’m pretty sure it’s toured as a ‘haunted’ attractions, but the area hasn’t recovered from the death toll. People say the trees are still red with the blood of his victims.

“Because he gradually graduated to killing up to five people in a night, by the end of the first year he killed 1,142 people.”

Midoriya paused so that everyone could take that in. everyone was in slight shock. They'd heard of serial killers, they'd heard of mass murderers of course, but never with numbers with that quite high, especially attributed to one killer.

"How many by year two?" Yoayaroza asked, with sick curiosity.

"Over 1,900, but it's speculated that there were more lost in the sea of trees. By then people were starting to cut their losses and abandon the city. The total number of confirmed kills were 3012 in a town that originally had a population of 25,000."

"Shit." Todoroki said softly. A few people blinked at him in surprise.

"Well technically he didn't wipe out the entire population," Yoayaroza said in considering tone. "Technically, he only wiped out only 12 percent of the population. I'm slightly surprise that the town is considered a ghost town. Did 22 thousand people really move as the result of one serial killer? Are you sure it was one serial killer?"

"You have to remember that this was a killer who was taking out heroes, police officers and gangsters alike," Midoriya said like they were just talking about statistics. "He'd been terrorizing the community for more than a year, 12 percent is still a significant death count especially for one person. And yes it was still assumed that it was one person doing the killing. He never graduated over five bodies, probably because killing more would be difficult for one person to achieve in a night. The forensic doesn't suggest a second killer either."

Yoayaroza nodded like that made sense.

"You guys are talking about real people," Tsuyu said quietly, like she was trying to remind them that there were faces behind the statistics.

Yoayaroza looked appropriately guilty but Midoriya's eyes grew distant and he stared at his hands, palm up almost a gesture of helplessness.

“They’re already dead,” he said bluntly. He clenched his fist. “They can’t be saved anymore. All we can do is move forward and make sure it doesn’t happen again.”

His eyes burned with determination shining in the candle light.

Sero felt the faint hum of admiration he often felt when Midoriya got like this. A cloying sense of jealousy, the desire to be more like him. Braver and kinder and stronger. Midoriya was the kind of person you wanted to chase after.

The moment of silence following his word told Sero he wasn’t the only one who felt that way.

“Soooo,” Kaminari said awkwardly. “Is that it? They all died?”

Midoriya seemed to take a moment to come out of his thoughts. “Well there is the theory.”

“Theory?” Sero and several classmates asked in unison.

Midoriya shifted and rubbed the back of his neck. “It’s a popular internet theory. But it actually makes sense with the evidence in the case. Have you guys ever heard of the Forgotten Man?”

Oh! It was that one! Sero remembered that story! There was a whole movie and creepy pasta about it. That’s why Sero had heard about the massacre, it was mentioned as possibly related.

“Are you fucking kidding me?” Bakugou scowled. “I thought you said you were telling a true story. Not stupid fucking urban legends.”

“Uh, yo,” Kirishima interrupted putting his hand on Bakugou’s shoulder and grinning. “I’ve never heard of the Forgotten Man.”

Mina snorted, “I wonder why.”

“Kero,” Tsuyu added.

“The Forgotten Man is a person who’s quirk supposedly makes you forget them the moment they’re out of sight. As long as they aren’t in your eye line, it’s like they don’t exist.” Sero said a little too eagerly.

“There’s a lot of stories online about people supposedly meeting him. There’s this whole joke of marking your skin with a marker if you see him, or noticing things suddenly appearing, people write entire journal entrees about seeing him and then forget they wrote them until they open their notebook and there it is. Basically if someone looses time they blame it on the Forgotten Man. It was a meme for a while and most of the stories are fake. If he was the one who committed the Fujikawaguchiko massacre he would probably be dead by now.”

“We don’t know if the murderer is a boy,” Jirou said sharply.

Midoriya hummed, “Mell, if were going by the theory that the murderer of Fujikawaguchiko is the same person as the Forgotten Man, then the DNA found at the crime scenes confirm that the killer is male.”

“Oh.” Jirou said sounding somehow a little disappointed that the killer wasn’t a girl.

“Anyway,” Midoriya said looking around their group. “The reason I bring up the Forgotten Man is because while I acknowledge a lot of the rumors about him are made up, a lot of the evidence lines up with it being someone with a quirk like his. I even did some tests.”

“I wanted to ask how you have access to the evidence in this case, Midoriya,” Yoayaroza said quickly enough that she couldn’t be interrupted.

Midoriya flinched. “Um… well… the thing is… it’s a really old case- so… um…”

“Out with, dumbass!” Bakugou snapped. Midoriya flinched worse.

“I just… the cases information was less well guarded since it was older so getting access to it wasn’t as hard as it should be.”

Sero sat up. “You broke into a police file.”

“No-No, I wasn’t the one who broke into it- I promise! I could never be caught breaking the law- I wouldn’t,” he was speaking really quickly in what Sero would call a liar voice. “I just... have an online friend who could get access to it and published it publicly and I may have looked over the case.”

“Oooooh, Midoriya broke the law,” Mina said playfully.

“What kind of online friends do you have that would do something like that?” Iida said disapprovingly crossing his arms across his chest.

Midoriya shrugged, not really answering. “But yeah, all the pieces fit. The letters suddenly appearing on the police chief's desk, the lack of witnesses, even the murders themselves. Everyone would be on their guard against strangers if people came up to them. But if the killer stayed in their blind spot, they’d never know he was there.”

“Even the heroes?” Todoroki asked softly.

Midoriya nodded. “The supposed murder scenes for them didn’t have nearly as much collateral damage as they could. That suggest quick kills.”

“Can you guys stop?” Ojiro suddenly snapped. He looked rather pale and several people jumped at his out burst. “This isn’t funny or a game. These are real people you’re talking about and it’s kinda messed up how casual you’re being about it.”

Midoriya rubbed that back of his neck and several other people in the class looked sheepish.

Sero leaned forward. “Well, I think we should be able to talk about it,” he said. “Midoriya was right about this being relevant towards hero analysis. I mean, come on, the current leader of the League of Villain wears corpse hands as part of his costume. And then there was that one weird dude with the teeth at camp. I think we need to develop thick skin, right?”

“I don’t know,” Uraraka said looking a little pale. “Isn’t it better that we not get used to this kind of thing? I don’t really want to be used to something like a massacre.”

“I suppose it’s like being a doctor,” Yoayaroza said, reasonably. “You grow used to the sight of blood in order to help heal people. We get used to violence in order to help prevent it, correct?”

A few of their classmates looked conflicted. Sero knew where he stood but he supposed everyone was free to their own opinion.

“I’m sorry if I took that story too far,” Midoriya said shyly. In Sero’s opinion they could have gone deeper, but too each there own, right? “I guess it’s about time to finish things up.”

Iida nodded officially. “Curfew is in around fifteen minutes.”

Everyone started getting up and stretching tiredly. The lights still hadn’t come back on and the halls were only dimly lit by the schools backup generator. They’d also be having to use the stairs so that would be fun.

“There’s one last thing,” Midoriya said before anyone could drift too far away. “There was one last piece of evidence in the case that wasn’t technically made public. A letter.”

“A lett-”

Bam!

A piece of paper was slammed down onto the TV table. A lot of people flinched and Iida and a few of the girls shrieked. Sero tilted his head to read the note.

“ *I wanted to see if I could do it,"* he read out loud.

A fearful hush fell through the room. All eyes turned towards Midoriya asking a silent question.

“...Is what it said.” he whispered, eyes bright and intense in the candlelight.

Then someone snorted and burst out laughing. It took a heartbeat too long to realize that it was Hagekure. Midoriya held up his hand and there was a smacking noise as she high-fived him. Midoriya’s face split into a grin and a few people grumbled at the last minute scare. Sero couldn’t help the wide grin that spread across his own face.

“Hey, that was pretty cool,” Sero sad falling in step beside the green haired boy as people started to separate and make the parlous track up the dark dorm steps.

Midoriya ducked hid head shyly. “I don’t know, it was a true story and i think i probably took things to far with my prank...”

“Nah, man,” Sero said slapping him on the shoulder. “Scaring people was the whole point. I think you did a good job. Hey, if you ever feel like talking about your murder cases again, I’ll always have an ear to listen. I find this stuff interesting too, you know.”

“Really?” Midoriya asked with slightly wet eyes. Apparently he felt more guilty than Sero was expecting.

“Yeah,” Sero said and was rewarded with an awkward hug. A moment latter he disappeared down his hall. Sero smiled in the dark and rubbed his hands together.

He wondered what other frights he could get in tonight.

After all, no one said the test of bravery was over.

Chapter End Notes

me: I came up with a concept that I’m proud of
Brother: It’s like the Silence from Doctor Who.
Me: …
Me, softly but with feeling: ...damnit

-the mirage hero is my friend's oc
-honestly i just wanted to write a horror story in this world
-Fujikawaguchiko is the closet town to the suicide forest and that's why I chose it. I literally copy pasted the name every time i had to use it because it would not stick in my head

check out my dicord: https://discord.gg/4udpQWC

There's a Difference

Chapter by serenawitchwriter

Chapter Summary

Bakugou isn’t paid enough to deal with this shit

Chapter Notes

I couldn't resist

See the end of the chapter for more notes

When the villain spat at them, both Bakugou and Deku failed to dodge. They tried but they failed so both were hit by a wave of disorientation. Their vision blurred and they both momentarily blacked out.

In the time it took for them to come to Half’n’half had frozen the fucker to the ground and Bakugou still felt sick so he’d deal with that shit later. He stumbled to Recovery Girl got checked over for injury and once he got the clear he passed right out, heedless to the world around him and whoever the hell was panicking at him. It was probably Deku worrying or something. Ugh.

When he woke up he had a splitting head and he groaned and rolled of the cot he was occupying in the nurse's office.

“Hey, Recovery Girl,” he said, in a way that was polite for him. He respected the nurse after all. “Can I get an aspirin?”

Then he blinked. Something was off about his voice. He blinked again. That was Deku’s voice…

OH FUCK!

He looked down at his hands. Freckled. Scarred.

OH FUCK!!!

He'd swapped bodies with fucking Deku! Of course he fucking did! Why was it always him!? Why was it always fucking Deku!? The guy was like a parasite on his life! Just always fucking there! Doing stuff!

Sitting up to quickly given his splitting headache he whirled to face the doctor. " *Where is Deku* ?" he hissed.

Recovery Girl scowled, not in the least bit intimidated by him. "He went back to class. Current instructions are to do what you want until you switch back. Which will be in about thirteen hours now. But i don't recommend using your, or in this case Midoriya's quirk. That would be stupid."

Bakugou scowled back twice as hard at her. He opened his mouth to say he wasn't stupid enough to break his bones the way Deku does, but the old woman flicked him in the forehead and said "Your face will freeze that way."

"It's not my face to begin with!" Bakugou shouted trying to slap her arm away but finding she had already nimbly pulled back.

"Than take care of it," the woman snapped. "That boy has enough scars without you adding to them."

Bakugou narrowed his eyes and pushed down the sudden guilt that rose in his gut. "Where is Deku?" he asked again more calmly.

“He’s in class,” Recovery Girl repeated irritably. “And if you have the energy to yell so much, I’m going to assume you have the energy to return to class. Take some gummies and go.”

Bakugou wasn’t very good at controlling his expression but he didn’t say anything rude to the nurse as she poured some Haribo into his scarred hand. “Thank you!” he said too loudly and aggressively.

His mom would kick his ass if he didn’t thank the medical professionals that help him. He agreed that anyone with sense would respect them. The same applied to waiters and retail workers. Why the fuck would you piss off the people who handle your food and aren’t paid to deal with your shit? That’s stupid loser talk! That’s stuff asshole villains do! And he is not a villain!

Anyway he stormed out of the office and tried to ignore the fact that his bones ached like an old man with osteoporosis. Jesus did Deku live in this kind of pain? Then why did he keep breaking bones all the time? SHIT! Was a storm coming or something? Bakugou could usually tell because his wrists would hurt but this was something else. He was probably bruised too because of the way Deku was throwing himself around in yesterday’s fight.

What an idiot? Who lived like this?

The bell for passing period rung.

“Hey, Midoriya!” an annoying friendly voice asked. It was that Mirio kid, who he vaguely respected but who was obviously close with Deku.

“Fuck off, I’m not in the mood!” Bakugou said without a second thought, brushing past him. He clenched his teeth and crossed his arms across his chest and projected his kill aura. It worked better than he was expecting. Bakugou had only ever seen Deku use a ‘kill’ aura against villains and what self respecting villain would be afraid of Deku?

But students in the hall gave him a wider birth than they did when Bakugou was in his own body projecting death.

“Are you okay?” Mirio asked trailing after him sounding worried. “Is something wrong?”

“I said fuck off!” Bakugou shouted again. Augh, why did Deku have to have so many friends?

The class 1-B fuck from the sports festival suddenly stepped in front of him. “Now, is that anyway to talk to your senpai?”

Bakugou very nearly didn’t resisted the urge to just punch the asshole in the face. But he knew he couldn’t afford anymore marks on his record and even in Deku’s body he knew he’d get blamed for the fight.

“Thanks, Monoma,” Mirio said offering the fucker a relieved smile, and then Miro had his arm around his shoulder and was smiling in an overly familiar way. Ugh! Deku didn’t even like being touched, what made this fucker think he could do it? Bakugou flailed until the arm was gone and Mirio was giving him a hurt look.

“Does it look like I want to deal with you idiots right now!” he shouted. “I said fuck off, I have stuff to do!”

“Like what?” Monoma said leaning into his space in a way that Bakugou absolutely despised. Bakugou glared him down and the coward caved first and stepped away looking slightly terrified.

Mirio still looked upset. Fuck. “Just- grr- later, okay?” he grit out at the older student.

Slightly appeased, Mirio frowned, “Okay, let me know when you feel better.”

“Yeah, whatever!” Bakugou took off towards the classroom, ignoring the stares he felt on his back.

He kicked the classroom door and screamed “Deku, what the fuck!”

Several people jumped and Deku scowled at him for a moment before he blinked and said, “Oh Kacchan!”

And suddenly the class was losing their shit. Loudly. While he still had a headache.

Bakugou grabbed the nerd by his jacket lapel and growled in his face. It felt like a serial reversal of their normal positions. Bakugou had never actually expected to have to threaten himself or see that simpering expression on his face but god dammit did it piss him off. “What the fuck have you been doing with my body!”

“Woah! Woah!” Shitty Hair gasped, getting between them. “You guys switched bodies!” and his voice cracked in a way that conveyed total surprise and horror.

Bakugou scowled. “Obviously! Are you saying you didn’t fucking notice?”

Midoriya looked sheepish and the rest of the class sweatdropped.

“YOU FUCKERS DIDN’T NOTICE THAT I WAS ACTING DIFFERENT!?”

“To be fair, Midoriya was acting just like you,” Mina said quickly. He glared at her and she epped.

“She’s not wrong though!” Kirishima said quickly coming to her defense. “He was really convincing.”

“I’ve always been good at impressions,” Midoriya said. He hadn’t even pulled out of Bakugou’s grip. “And I’ve known you longer than anyone.”

“Are you fucking kidding me?” Bakugou spat. Midoriya started scowling back, the expression fitting perfectly on Bakugou’s face.

“What do you think?” he spat back. “I was told to do whatever I wanted and I figured, these fuckers would want me to do embarrassing things with your body while you weren’t around. So I figured the smart thing was to pretend to be you until you woke up. It’s not rocket science, idiot.”

Okay. This was getting kind of weird. He felt like he was shouting at himself in the mirror except there was an actual person in front of him.

“That’s freaking creepy,” Angel Face whispered.

Bakugou dropped the idiot and Deku slipped into his seat and crossed his arms across his chest, looking like he was ready to bite someone head off.

“Dude, that’s so freaking cool,” Kirishima says intensely. “Can you do other people?”

Midoriya’s face relaxed again and he showed more positive emotion than Bakugou would ever bless these peons with. He smiled, “Yeah! I’m told my All Might is really good and I can do basically anyone in my notebook, though obviously, my impression gets better if it’s someone I actually know. It’s also a bit more difficult doing them with Bakugou’s face, because I know my face better.”

He rubbed the back of his head earnestly. Jirou elbowed Bakugou in the side and whispered, “You’re actually look pretty cute when you’re not trying to piss everyone off.”

“I LOOK CUTE ALL THE TIME!”

“Do me! Do me!” Kirishima shouted jumping up and down like a child.

Abruptly Deku's body language changed and he was grinning like a maniac to the point where Bakugou was almost scared he had shark teeth. "Isn't Bakugou cool! He's so manly and even if he can be kind of a jerk he always goes for his goals head on!"

"Isn't he!?" Kirishima yelled back also smiling. They went on shouting excitedly at each other and if they didn't look different, you'd think they were twins. The sunshine that was radiating off of them was blinding and also *not helping Bakugou's headache!*

"Oh me next!" Mina said eagerly.

"Or me!" Sero said leaning over his desk.

"What an impressive talent," Iida nodded even though no one cared what he had to say.

"WOULD YOU ALL SHUT THE FUCK UP!" Bakugou finally snapped. "OW! JESUS, WHEN I GET MY BODY BACK I AM GOING TO ROAST YOU ALL ON A SPIT AND FUCKING EAT YOU BURNT BODIES. GODDAMNIT. THIS ISN'T FUNNY! THIS IS A FUCKING NIGHTMARE AND YOUR ALL SHOUTING AND JOKING LIKE THIS IS A FREAKING IDOL COMPETITION. FUCK YOU!"

Bakugou ended his rant by rubbing his throbbing forehead and glaring angrily at everyone. The class had gone totally silent in shock.

"Wow, Deku," Angel Face said softly. "You're really scary when you yell."

"Right?" Kirishima agreed, still lacking any sense of volume control. "I mean I thought I've seen him yell before but dang…"

Jirou nodded, twirling one of her freaky earlobes. "Hard to believe Bakugou looks scarier with Midoriya's face."

The class nodded in solemn agreement. “We like you just the way you are, Midoriya,” the whole class said in unison and hugged Bakugou’s body. Deku flushed to his hairline.

“Grr!” Bakugou ground his teeth.

“Oi!” the yellow caterpillar that was their homeroom teacher said as he crawled into the room. Everyone quickly rushed to their seat.

“Get out of my seat,” Bakugou growled at Deku who was still sitting at his desk. The nerd went back to scowling and crossing his arms aggressively.

“Midoriya, I don’t care how good you think your Bakugou impression is, sit down.” Aizawa-Sensei said icily.

“Yeah! You heard-”

“Midoriya.” Aizawa interrupted. “I don’t see anyone else with green hair in here. Sit.”

Bakugou gave an offended squack but ended up sitting in Deku’s seat anyway. He spent the rest of the day glaring resentfully at the back of Midoriya’s presently blond head.

Bastard.

The bastard.

Why was it always him?

Chapter End Notes

I feel like I could do more with this idea but I don't have any ideas yet. Maybe a bonus chapter later?

- Aizawa is absolutely aware that Midoriya and Bakugou switched bodies. He's just being mean.
- Midoriya does clear things up with Mirio later
- Monoma is now slightly afraid of green boy. He's gonna work up his courage and feel stupid about backing down later, but he won't underestimate Midoriya again (he totally will)

discord: https://discord.gg/4udpQWC

ART! : https://www.instagram.com/p/Bjk2YI8gdHG/?utm_source=ig_share_sheet&igshid=zj4dck2c8hq6

Underestimated

Chapter by serenawitchwriter

Chapter Summary

Kirishima underestimates Midoriya's workout regimen

Chapter Notes

a pure chapter

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It started when Midoriya lifted the couch to vacuum under it.

A couch that Kirishima and Kaminari were sitting on. A couch that, with their combined weight, weighed around 500 pounds.

Midoriya did it like it was nothing.

“DUDE!” Kirishima shouted and Midoriya jumped instantly dropping the couch.

“Ah, sorry! I didn’t see you there!” the green haired boy said shutting of the vacuum. “You didn’t get hurt did you?”

“DUDE!” Kirishima said loudly. “How did you do that! I thought you only had super strength when you were using your quirk, but there’s no green lightning or broken bones or anything!”

Midoriya squinted looking slightly annoyed. “I’m not breaking my bones anymore,” he muttered. "Most of the time..."

“When did you get so swol, little guy!” Kaminari said in what Kirishima called his meme voice.

“He smol,” Kirishima said passionately. “But he also stronk.”

Midoriya raised his eyebrows. “Um… since before school started? I have a special workout plan. I… uh… kind have to be strong so that my… uh... *armsdon’texplodeoffmybody* ...”

“Say what now!?”

“Nothing,” Midoriya said too quickly, waving his hand. “Anyway I need muscle mass for my quirk to work properly. So I’ve been building it up for a while now. I think I currently can safely lift around 600 pounds?”

“Bro,” Kirishima said eyes going scarily wide in his head.

Midoriya gave a humble laugh and rubbed the back of his head.

“ *Bro* ,” Kirishima said with more feeling. He jumped over the back of the couch and bounced to stand in front of Midoriya. Midoriya leaned back slightly like he wasn’t sure what was happening. “ *Teach me.* ”

“What?”

“Teach me your tiny strongman ways, Midoribro,” Kirishima said earnestly. Joking aside Kirishima was crazy impressed by Midoriya’s strength. That was like more than three times his weight. He was way stronger than Kirishima and he’d been training for just as long.

“Oh… uh… I’m not exactly the person to ask,” Midoriya said shyly. “I was given a work out plan and it’s not the kinda plan I would suggest to anyone. But you can ask All Might to draw you up your own plan. I’m sure he could give you a safe one that challenges you.”

Kirishima imagined himself with All Might’s very manly muscles. So cool!

Kaminari coughed, “Machamp.”

And ruined everything. Now Kirishima will never be able to get that strong and turn to rock without thinking about that Pokemon. At least he didn’t have four arms too- oh god now Kirishima will never be able to look at Fourth Kind without thinking about that Pokemon. Machamp was a totally manly rad Pokemon but Kirishima wanted to be like the Crimson Riot not a Pokemon. Wait circular logic! Crimson Riot is totes as muscly and manly as All Might. Nice save, brain!

Still… “Can’t you teach me, bro? There’s nothing cooler than growing stronger together!”

Midoriya scrunched his eyebrows together. “I don’t know. I think it would probably be safer if you just went to All Might.”

Jirou snorted as she walked through to the kitchen, “Since when have you cared about safety.”

She didn’t even know what the conversation was about and she just burned him like that. Cold blooded.

Midoriya flushed to his hair and looked adorably flustered, “I-I’m not that bad-”

“Come on, man! Do it for friendship!”

Midoriya gave in. “O-okay- but if it gets too strenuous for you promise me you’ll stop. I really don’t want you getting hurt.”

“Was that a humble brag I just heard?” Kaminari said smacking Midoriya on the shoulder. “Hell yeah! You get that ego! Woooo!”

Midoriya blushed worse and was soooo cute. He was like a strawberry with his poof of green hair at the top of his red face and his freckles were like the seeds. He’s just great.

“I’ll bring down my schedule for you,” he said, looking earnest. Kirishima beamed back.

And he kept that smile until he had the paper in his hand.

“Midoriya?” Kirishima smile was frozen in place but it didn’t have the same feeling behind it.

“Yeah?”

“This says you wake up at four thirty in the morning.”

“Yeah.”

“Oh… okay.”

Kirishima had never been a morning person.

“Kirishima,” a voice whisper yelled. “Kirishima.”

Kirishima groaned and turned over, smacking the hand that was poking him away. It was too early to wake up. Go away.

“Kirishima,” the voice said at a normal volume but it was enough to jolt kirishima up with a start and he hit his head against whoever was leaning over him. He let out a yell of surprise and midoriya stumbled back gripping his chin in pain.

“Ahhh,” Kirishima said, heart still not under control. Midoriya was in his room dressed in running clothes and rubbing his now bruised chin. “Midoriya, what are you doing in my room?”

“You told me to come in and wake you if you didn’t wake you in time. Gave me the key and everything. Ow. you have a hard head.”

“So I’ve been told.” Kirishima gave a sleepy smile. “Wake me up for what?”

Midoriya gave him a withering look and it took a long moment for Kirishima’s memory to click. “Oh yeah, what time is it?”

“A little after five, come on,” Midoriya said with slight urgency.

“Uh... right!” Kirishima said stumbling to his feet. “Just- uh- let me find some pants.”

Kirishima was wearing underwear but they both ended up blushing anyway. Midoriya stepped back out of the room.

It turned out they were going for run. The sun hadn’t even risen yet and the sky was all gray and misty, like the world hadn’t even woken up yet. Everything was eerily quiet. Midoriya quickly led Kirishima through some running stretches that admittedly Kirishima wasn’t as good at sticking to as he should be.

Midoriya was already muttering to himself about which route they should take. Somewhere in the rant Kirishima heard that Iida had apparently already taken off. Somehow Kirishima wasn't surprised the Iida was up this early.

They set out a regular paced jog, light to warm up, but after ten minutes of that, Midoriya's expression shifted and he said "Okay. Go." and than he sprinted like he was running from something.

Kirishima stumbled over himself to keep up. After reaching a certain distance, Midoriya returned to a jogging pace and Kirishima felt like he was dying. Midoriya wasn't out of breath.

"You okay?" He asked like he wasn't currently the worst monster Kirishima had ever met. How far was that? Running was part of Kirishima's gym plan, how did Midoriya already wear him out? It wasn't fair. No one could run like that.

"On your left!" Iida shouted cheerfully as he passed by at a brisk jog that was faster than theirs.

Iida didn't count!

"Don't feel bad," Midoriya gave him a sunny smile. "Iida laps me all the time. He's probably on his third lap."

"How even-" Kirishima shook his head, too tired to complete his sentence. The sun still hasn't risen yet. How are these two even alive. Ugh.

"Are you ready to pick up the pace again?"

"What?"

Midoriya had already taken off.

The monster.

It was seven in the morning and Kirishima felt like dying. Midoriya didn't even look tired. How? Was it his quirk? Ahhhhhhh.

"I told you to set your own pace," Midoriya said struggling with his tie. Damn him for being so cool. Damn him for being so manly. Ahhhhhhhhhhhhh.

He finished tying his tie with a 'good-enough' shrug and slapped Kirishima on the shoulder. Which hurt. Oh the cruel tyrant. "See you for afternoon weight lifting."

Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Kirishima was dead. He was literally dead. Between Midoriya's morning run and gym with Aizawa, Kirishima was dead. Totally dead. A corpse.

"You ready?" Midoriya asked with his bright eyed innocence. "If you're too tired you can stop. Really, it's safer that you don't push yourself."

"QUITTING IS FOR THE WEAK!" Kirishima shouted louder than he meant to. "FRIENDSHIP!" he said to motivate himself.

Midoriya did not look reassured. Probably because Kirishima was lying face down on the floor. But Kirishima believed in himself and he was sure that Midoriya believed in him too. He had the fighting spirit. He could do this!

"Uh… well pace yourself, okay?" Midoriya said patting him awkwardly on the back. He'd already gotten through his warm up stretches and Kirishima was still on the floor.

“Remember, you can stop at any time, there’s no shame in knowing your limits.”

“I… bro,” Kirishima said emotionally.

Midoriya seemed to understand what he meant because he nodded, “Knowing your own limits is er… manlier than hurting yourself to keep up with your friends. I understand.”

Kirishima burst into tears and hugged Midoriya. He was a good friend. The best. The coolest dude. So understanding. Kirishima’s everything hurt.

Midoriya smiled and helped Kirishima into a sitting position. “You can still hang out if you want.”

“Yeah!” Kirishima getting a second wind in his verbal energy that his body was unable to match. “I still have to observe your strongman secrets! Show me, oh green sensei!”

Midoriya laughed a little and rubbed the back of his neck. “There actually isn't that much to it. Just doing strength training safely and gradually increasing the weight over time.” He started moving twenty pound weights onto the bell bar as if they weighed nothing at all. “Anyone can do it really. I just had a good coach and a good meal plan and I put in the work.”

Kirishima found himself blinking up at the number of weights. He estimated that they were at very least twice Midoriya’s body weight. He said he could do three times his weight and had lifted the couch with them on it like they were in some kind of comedy gag show, but seeing that weight laid out in metal plates was different. “You’re… you’re not really going to lift that, are you?”

Midoriya just laughed laid down on the bench and said “Sato? Spot me?”

Sato from across the room, dropped the dumbbell he was curling and it hit the ground far harder than Kirishima was comfortable with. Kirishima wanted to be offended that Midoriya

didn’t trust him to spot him but to be honest, Kirishima didn’t trust himself to spot that weight.

Kirishima watched in slight awe as Midoriya lifted the bar and started benching the three hundred (possibly four hundred) pounds. He hardly seemed to be struggling. Sato didn’t seem phased.

Like he’d seen it before.

And there was no green lightning dancing across his skin. This was all Midoriya.

He did this often.

HE DID THIS OFTEN!

Kirishima teared up again! He’s just so *manly* !

Later Kirishima was still dead and laying on the couch waiting for feeling to return to his toes. He’d failed in his mission to train with Midoriya and become the two muscle bros but he’d come out wiser for it. Tomorrow, he’d ask All Might to make him a plan tailored to his own body and he wouldn’t make the mistake of underestimating Midoriya’s strength again. Probably.

Jirou, rudely sat on him. “Wow,” she said, “I can’t believe Midoriya killed Kirishima.”

“Really? Is he okay?” Mina shouted from the kitchen.

He groaned. He always had the energy for outdated memes. “Stop telling people I’m dead.”

Jirou poked the back of his head. “You seem pretty dead to me.”

“Ugh… friendship!” he said waving a tired fist in the air.

Jirou hmphed and shouted back to Mina. “He’s fine but he’s dead!”

Someone burst into loud laughter from the entrance. Kirishima tiredly lifted his head and found that the dorms had been infiltrated by Tetsutetsu, his best friend and blood brother. Tetsutetsu was pointing and laughing at him.

“Heard you were trying a new workout plan but I didn’t expect you to give up so easily!”

Kirishima leveled a tired glare at him, one that would probably have been more effective if Jirou wasn’t still sitting on him. “You are underestimating the sheer manliness that is Midoriya’s exercise plan. I assure you, you can’t do it.”

Tetsutetsu just laughed harder, “Wanna bet?”

“I can’t believe Midoriya killed Tetsutetsu,” Kirishima grinned the next day.

“So manly,” Tetsutetsu said crying on the floor.

“He can’t be that strong,” Shoji said, as though he didn’t have an obvious advantage.

“Jesus christ, Midoriya killed Shoji!”

“I told you to set your own pace!” Midoriya shouted obviously alarmed.

Unfortunately for him it was becoming clear that this was going to be one of the school wide challenges. The betting pool was only growing and no one had beaten him yet. Soon every brave soul was going to try to beat his work out plan if only to get the money.

In the end it was Bakugou who made it through the day because he actually paced himself better than the ‘rest of you idiots’ and didn’t ‘try to beat someone with a strength quirk in a weightlifting contest like some kinda suicidal idiot’. He seemed unsatisfied with that incomplete victory though and Kirishima was pretty sure he would steadily be training to be as strong as Izuku in the future.

What a guy.

“I don’t think this is a good idea,” Iida said.

“Oh come on man! Don’t be such a fuddyduddy,” Uraraka said elbowing him in the ribs. “Don’t you wanna see if he can do it?”

“No cheating, Uraraka.” Tsuyu warned.

“You have the camera ready, All Might?”

“Ah, yes, of course,” All Might said from across the room.

“You ready, Midoriya?” Kirishima exclaimed.

Midoriya licked his lips. “Yep.”

“Bitch better not drop me,” Bakugou scoffed.

“Okay, ready?” All Might cued. “Now.”

“FRIENDSHIP!” Midoriya said in a strained voice as he lifted all his friends. They were sitting on a bar as evenly as they could. It was at least half the class, all of Midoriya’s closest friends. Iida, Uraraka, Todoroki, Tsuyu, Kirishima, Bakugou (who got roped in, but totally actually wanted to be here), Shinsou, and Kouda. He got them to chest level and they struggled not to mess up his balance as he did an overhead press and pushed them further into the air.

Midoriya grinned.

All Might took the photo.

Chapter End Notes

-google did the math for me on how strong Midoriya is without his quirk. Basically I looked up how much weight it takes to deadlift a car and it was 500 to 700 pounds. So I said Midoriya could do the average of that. He probably could do more since he’s trained more since the end of the summer and one could argue that OfA makes him passively stronger by the very nature of the quirk. but I’d say around six hundred is probably what he could lift safely without his quirk. He could probably push upwards of that in an emergency.
-that number gets thrown out the window in the last scene because by the math his classmates weigh around 1500 together. But that’s pushing his limits, right? Plus ultra!
-i acknowledge that i didn’t do as much with Kirishima’s character development as i could of, but fear not, dear readers, for i have plans for the future :D

Overdue

Chapter by serenawitchwriter

Chapter Summary

Midoriya gets hit with a truth quirk

Chapter Notes

it's PLOT TIME

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The moment Midoriya got hit with a truth serum quirk (belonging to one of the business course students) he begged Sero to tape his mouth shut. In a lot more words. Iida had always known that Midoriya was intelligent but the complexity and volume of the thoughts that were passing through his head at any given moment was more than he was expecting. It was quite impressive if not a little intimidating. Iida considered himself rather intelligent but he didn't think like that.

Sero, thankfully, obliged, if for no other reason than to silence his poor friend. The rest of the day was spent with Midoriya signing rapidly. According to Kouda and his whiteboard, as well as their teachers, the truth serum bled into sign language but Midoriya was not fluent or fast enough to communicate his thoughts well. Still, Iida caught Kouda blushing like a maiden often and Iida couldn't help but feel a bit curious as to what exactly he was saying.

Unfortunately, he was to find out.

It was lunchtime and Midoriya decided to eat in the classroom so that he could remove the tape and eat without talking anyone's ear off. Iida could easily imagine his friend talking to himself to the point where he could barely eat. He felt bad but these things just seem to happen to Midoriya. On an off day, they'd happen to another member of the class, but most of it seemed to happen to Midoriya.

Anyway, Uraraka and Iida asked if he was sure he didn't want company but he waved them off so their group went off to eat lunch in the cafeteria. It was a few minutes in when he saw Mina, Sero, and Kaminari and Kirishima sneak off. Iida had a good guess where they were going, so naturally he, Todoroki, and Uraraka went to intercede.

Iida was the first to catch up but unfortunately, the rest of the 'Bakusquad', as they were fondly nicknamed, had already broken into the classroom.

"Tell me your secrets!" Mina was shouting obnoxiously hugging Midoriya and messing with his hair.

Midoriya had a panicked look on his face but was biting his lip and saying things like. "Just because I have a lot of secrets doesn't mean I can safely tell you them, Mina. Please don't put me in this position. Some of my secrets could literally put you in danger and I really don't want that-"

"Oh come on, one won't hurt," Mina said.

Midoriya glanced away. "Ow, okay, you know that thing with the Hero Killer Stain. Me, Iida and Todoroki were the one to take him down but the police covered it up so they wouldn't have to arrest us or look bad."

"Midoriya!" Iida gasped stepping into the room.

"I'm sorry, Iida, it was a safe one!" Midoriya said. He looked slightly pained.

The Bakusquad were busy losing their shit at the revelation.

"Oh my god! Was that why you guys were so offended when I said he might be cool?" Kaminari asked eyes going suddenly wide. "Because he tried to kill you all."

Iida narrowed his eyes, “You already knew he tried to kill us.”

“Well, yeah, but he also totes saved Midoriya from that noumu," Kaminari pointed out. “Why would he do that if he really wanted to kill you?”

“Because I fit into his worldview of what a hero is. I proved myself heroic enough for him. Iida didn’t which is why Iida got stabbed in the arm and has to eventually get surgery to fix it. Like me. I need surgery too, though I already got part of it done. Further surgery would take me out of school so I’m kinda putting it off and have suffered some nerve damage. I’m not sure if you guys have noticed but I can’t curl my pinky on my left hand all the way. Isn’t that weird? At least it doesn’t hurt much.”

“Midoriya!” Iida gasped.

“No way!?” Mina said, watching his pinky twitch. It didn't close with the rest of his fist. “Is this the kind of thing you avoid telling us? Oh man, what else is there?”

“Midoriya!” Uraraka gasped out of breath finally catching up to them, Todoroki and strangely Bakugou not far behind.

“I really don’t want to tell you guys my secrets,” Midoriya said pleadingly. “Can’t you just tape my mouth shut again, Sero? I don’t need to finish lunch. Just end it for me, please. I can’t do this. I may have gone off on my own to-”

Bakugou scoffed. “Oi! Quit being idiots and come back to lunch. That guy's secrets aren’t that interesting anyway. So quit bugging him.”

Oh, he was brought to handle his friends. How clever.

“Oh, you would know, Kacchan?” Kirishima asked with a playful grin.

“Oooh, that’s right!? Mido and Baku are childhood friends!” Mina squealed. “You must have all sorts of childhood stories about this dork! Tell me! Tell me! Tell me!”

“That idiot doesn’t know sh-”

“He told me to kill myself a few times,” Midoriya said, eyebrows knitted together. Then his mind seemed to catch up to his mouth and he paled and looked absolutely horrified. Everyone in the classroom froze.

“He what?” Todoroki said, expression blank but Iida could feel the temperature in the room dropping.

Midoriya was pressing his lips together as if he were doing everything in his power not to speak. Even still the words burst from his lips, “He used to bully me really badly and destroy my stuff and call me a useless Deku and sometimes if he was in a particularly bad mood he’d tell me to jump off the school roof because I used to be quirkless and the only way I could possibly dream of getting a quirk was jumping-”

“Dude,” came Kirishima's horrified whisper. Midoriya was crying as if speaking the truth was painful.

Iida felt that burning feeling he had felt when Stain had wounded his brother. It was like his very thoughts were on fire. He couldn’t really think properly at that moment. He was too overwhelmed by his emotions.

Iida’s fist met with Bakugou’s eye with a satisfying smack, his mind lagging behind him.

It felt good.

It felt cathartic. Though he wasn’t sure who the catharsis was really for, himself or Midoriya.

Bakugou, clutching his eye, looked at Iida as if he had grown a second head.

“How fucking dare you!” Iida spat, taking a leaf from Midoriya’s book. He was right about swearing when you meant it. Oh god did he mean it! “How fucking dare you speak to anyone like that! I knew you lacked heroic qualities but-” Iida growled in frustration- “to do something as villainous as to tell someone to kill themselves! Someone who clearly cares about you! WHAT THE FUCK IS THE MATTER WITH YOU!?”

“Holy shit,” Kirishima whispered in shock. Everyone seemed startled by Iida’s reaction except for maybe Todoroki and Midoriya.

Iida grabbed Bakugou by the lapels and shook him. “Haven’t your parents taught you anything? Do you think they’d be proud of you if they'd heard you'd done something like that? What if Midoriya did kill himself, huh? Did you think of that? Where do you think you’d be then? If you were implemented in his death? I just-I can’t understand,” Iida growled. “What could possibly drive you to-?”

“Midoriya do you know why he told you what he did? Was it like a joke? Do you know if it was serious?” Kaminari asked biting the inside of his cheek and backing away. Midoriya had his hand plastered over his face trying to stop the words that wanted to come out his mouth.

“It was because I wanted to apply to UA, he wanted to be the only kid from our school to do it. He told me to jump a few times before then but I didn’t really listen.”

“Obviously,” Uraraka said, tone sharper than usual. She looked angry too and was standing in front of the door in case Bakugou tried to run.

Iida snorted. “The reason you acted like a villain was because someone else wanted to be a hero? Why am I not surprised?”

“It wasn’t like that!” Bakugou spat finally finding his voice. “You don’t know anything!”

Iida bared his teeth, “Then do, kindly, explain?”

“Iida, please, stop,” Midoriya said in a pained voice. “Dredging up the past won’t help anything.”

“No,” Todoroki said glancing between everyone in the room. He appeared the calmest but Iida could tell by the chill in the room that he was upset. “I think we would all like to know.”

Bakugou looked to his friends as if for help. Sero was still edging back as though waiting for an explosion. Kaminari was right with him. Mina looked slightly angry too. Kirishima looked the most upset, close to tears like Bakugou had personally betrayed him.

“Well?” Iida asked pointedly.

“I was just a kid,” Bakugou said defensively. Iida’s rage burned brighter.

“We’ve all been kids. A show of hands how many of us have told someone to kill themselves?” he grits out. No one raised their hands, of course, because they were decent humans.

“I had some issues-” Bakugou said not meeting his eyes. Instead, he made eye contact with Kirishima. Kirishima gave the smallest shake of the head and Bakugou’s eyes seemed to widen at the response. None of his friends were going to step in and save him this time.

“Iida, he’s gotten loads better since we were kids,” Midoriya said, at least trying. “He’s grown up so much since we’ve come to UA, there’s no need to do this.”

“Shut up, Deku,” Bakugou spat automatically, almost on reflex. “I don’t need you to defend me.”

There was another smack as Iida punched him again. This was just as shocking at the first and finally, Bakugou tried to push the taller boy off even setting off a small explosion. It hurt but Iida was stronger than the blond was expecting, especially when he was this angry. Iida's new burns stung, but training had made that feeling all too familiar.

"What issues exactly could drive you to want someone to die?" Iida glared Bakugou down. They'd never gotten along. Bakugou had always been disrespectful whether it be about the rules or to the people around him. But Iida had always tried to give him the benefit of the doubt. Everyone in the class did.

Figures he didn't deserve it.

Bakugou glared back, stubbornness coming back in full force. "Fuck off."

The stare off went on.

"Bakugou," Kirishima finally interrupted. He looked surprisingly vulnerable. "Please."

Bakugou looked at him and quickly looked away. "I didn't want him to die," he said begrudgingly.

"Then why did you tell him to?" Iida asked.

"Shut up," Bakugou snapped back. "I don't know, okay? His face pissed me off. I don't know! I was an angry kid, he was in the way and he just pissed me off. Just drop it already."

Iida ground his teeth. Uraraka made a little hmph noise. Midoriya had his chin pressed close to his chest, hand still clamped around his mouth. Silent tears were running down his face in rivets. Todoroki had frozen a small spot on the floor, but his expression was closed off. Mina looked like she wanted to say something but was biting her lip. Sero and Kamiari were near the window and both look torn between fear and anger.

Kirishima was the one that spoke, “Dude, Bakugou, that’s kinda messed up. Really, *really* messed up.”

An actual look of betrayal crossed the blonds face. It was like he didn’t understand! How could he not understand!? Iida didn’t get it. How could anyone not understand that what he did was irredeemable?

Iida rose his fist again.

“Iida, stop!” Midoriya cried out. Iida turned and found his friend staring at him with earnest green eyes. “It’s not his fault, okay? He doesn’t deserve this.”

Even Bakugou looked confused at the response. But the blond didn’t speak up. Instead, he glanced away looking guilty.

“Midoriya,” Iida said, “You can’t really believe that what he did was right. If you followed through-”

“But I didn’t,” Midoriya cut off. “I didn’t commit suicide so that’s the end of that. I don’t need you fighting my battles for me. Bakugou has been an asshole for almost as long as I can remember. That doesn’t mean he’s a bad guy and that doesn’t mean you hitting him is going to make things better. It’s easy to judge things from an outside perspective but you don’t know him like I do. So please, kindly, butt out.”

“Deku,” Bakugou said the same moment Iida said, “Midoriya.”

“That goes for all of you,” he crossed his arms across his chest and despite the burn of determination in his eyes and the set of his jaw, he looked incredibly vulnerable. The class's voices seemed to catch in their throats. “Just leave it alone.”

Uraraka seemed to swallow. Then she set her expression into something more stubborn. “Deku- Izuku, as your friends I don’t think we can do that. We can’t as heroes either. You know what he did was wrong. If-if he’d done the same thing to any of us, you’d stand in the way. So why is it okay that he hurts you? Why are you okay with him hurting you, Izuku?”

“Because I hate myself,” Izuku said without hesitation then his hands flew to his mouth to cover it. Clearly the work of the truth quirk. Seeming to be caught in the shocked and horrified looks of his classmates, he looked around at them with a panicked gaze before he ran from the room.

“Izuku!” Uraraka was the first to break from her horror and go after him. Todoroki wasn’t far behind. Iida hesitated. His hand was still gripping Bakugou’s. He could easily catch up but he hesitated.

Bakugou’s eyes were wide as saucers. Iida met them, vengeful anger still hot in his blood. It was an anger he had promised himself to get over, yet it apparently had remained. “Are you happy?” he asked the blonde, softly.

And Bakugou’s eyes actually shined with tears and a mix of unidentifiable emotions that Iida didn’t have the patience to place. He dropped the boy on his ass and went after his friend.

He felt no satisfaction and Midoriya was long gone once he caught up to Todoroki and Uraraka.

The anger didn’t go away.

Chapter End Notes

oof
- i just really wanted Iida to punch Bakugou in the face and all the sudden emotions were happening.
-what is even a smooth tone shift? I don't even know
-next chapter will have even more feelings. It’s the oof that keeps oofing

Discord: https://discord.gg/mkaewdq

Smile, Kid

Chapter by serenawitchwriter

Chapter Summary

Yagi and Midoriya have an important talk

Chapter Notes

who feels like crying?

part 2 of the four-shot special

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Oh, there you are!” Yagi said, surprised at where he found his successor. Midoriya startled like a small animal.

They were on the roof of UA Heights Alliance and until a moment ago Midoriya had been sitting cross-legged staring out over the edge of the building. His fingers were tangled in the links of the chain link fence that surrounded the roof area. His expression was strangely distant and melancholy.

Now he was looking nervous and flustered and far more like his normal self.

“What are you doing up here my boy?” Yagi asked, trying to put off the real reason he was looking for Midoriya in the first place.

Midoriya’s expression softened and he said, almost too quietly, “I like to come up here to think. It helps me focus.”

“Ah, well, it’s good you have a safe place,” Yagi smiled, wondering if the upcoming discussion would destroy that feeling of safety. He couldn’t avoid it any longer. Between the warnings from Principal Nedzu, Aizawa and Gran Torino, this conversation needed to happen. He’d put it off as long as he could but well no time like the present. He owed it to Nana and Midoriya.

Midoriya hadn’t replied to Yagi’s comment. It gave the older hero an off feeling, almost like Midoriya didn’t think of the roof as a safe place but Yagi couldn’t quite pin the feeling down.

“I’m sure you’re wondering why I came looking for you,” Yagi said awkwardly. Midoriya turned and looked at him with his wide green eyes. Yagi had always appreciated those eyes, they were busy and intelligent and they were far more honest than Yagi’s smile. They said far more about his character than any of Yagi’s fake smiles ever could.

“Um, yeah? Is this related to All For One? Is there something important I need to know?” Midoriya asked, looking as though he were going to start on an anxious ramble.

Yagi quickly cut him off. “None of that, no,” he said. He wondered if it was a mark of him being a poor teacher that Midoriya’s first instinct when Yagi wanted to talk to him was to wonder about some big looming threat. “Well, not exactly anyway.”

Midoriya was still looking at him with his big emerald eyes.

No wonder he and Nana had never talked about this. This was perhaps the hardest thing he’d ever done. He couldn’t stand the idea of hurting his young bright-eyed student, Nana hadn’t even been sick. She had no warning. So he couldn’t blame her for missing this particular talk. He, on the other hand…

“I’m dying, Midoriya,” Yagi said shutting his eyes so he wouldn’t have to see the expression on Midoriya’s face.

There was a long stretch of silence, Yagi was unsure when to open his eyes now that they were closed. Midoriya didn’t make a sound to indicate what was going through his head.

Finally, Yagi cracked his eyes and found that rather than crushed, Midoriya just looked thoughtful.

“Midoriya?” Yagi asked, unsure if he should be concerned. Normally Midoriya was so quick to cry and show his emotions. It was odd that he didn’t at this moment.

“I know…” Midoriya said quietly and Yagi’s heart jumped to his throat. Oh god, something must really be wrong!

“M-Midoriya, are you okay!?” Yagi’s voice shook. He lifted his arms unsure if he should move to comfort his student or give him space.

Midoriya hesitated and then in that same soft voice he said. “I’ve known you were dying since the day I met you. I’ve… I’ve thought about this before, Yagi-san.”

And that hurt so much more than it should have. Not just that his son-student had to think about him dying at all but that at this moment Midoriya had called him by his real name. He was treating him like a person. Midoriya seemed scarily mature at that moment.

“I… I’m sorry,” Yagi couldn’t help but say.

Izuku’s eyebrows drew together. “Why? It’s not your fault. You’ve been dying a long time. We’ve both known this. And besides… death is unavoidable.”

“Midoriya, are you sure you’re okay?” Yagi asked, nervously. “You’re not acting like yourself...”

Midoriya blinked a few times and seemed to become more present, “Oh, I’m sorry All Might,” he said rubbing the back of his head, but he still looked off. Not like he was someone else, more like he was upset in a way Yagi had never seen before. “I’ve had a long day, I guess. I got caught with a business course kid’s truth quirk and it’s been a bit crazy since then. I may have said some things I didn’t want to. Nothing about One For All, just some

things about my past. I think everyone is worried. I was actually crying before you got here, but I guess I ran out of tears? Sorry, I'll probably cry later if that's okay-"

"Truth quirk?" Yagi cut in. At least Midoriya could still ramble. He wasn't too far gone.

Midoriya nodded and sniffed. "Yeah, sorry, I tried to keep my mouth taped shut but my friends decided to ambush me when I was eating. Apparently, I'm too obvious about having secrets. Sorry."

Yagi put his hand against Midoriya's cheek. "I'm sure it's fine. You said you didn't mention One For All? So no harm done."

Midoriya didn't look like he agreed but he bit his lip. "So you came up here to talk to me about... oh… your imminent death?"

While he wasn't crying he did look upset. Yagi smiled sadly. "Yes, my boy. I've been told that it's best that we- er- rip the bandage off, so to speak. First, you needed to be aware that my death is coming and then- well, then the plans for my death that are to follow."

Midoriya's eyes fell and became distant again. "...like your funeral…" he said softly, as though it hurt to think about.

Yagi cleared his throat, "Well, yes, and your training after I'm gone, and where my financial assets will go, and… and so on."

Midoriya was silent. Apparently, he could keep up his reputation as number one tear factory because his eyes were shiny though he still didn't cry. He leaned his face into Yagi's hand but he didn't lift his gaze.

"And so on…" he whispered.

“Do you think you want to take a seat again, Midoriya?”

His boy nodded solemnly.

They both sat. Midoriya turned back towards the edge and tangled his fingers back in the chain-link. Yagi sat awkwardly beside him, legs so long that he had to scooch away so that he could sit cross-legged properly. Midoriya didn’t react, eyes still staring off the edge of the roof. He looked so much older than he did when Yagi met him. He was growing up frighteningly fast. Yagi wondered if he’d get to see him become an adult. If there were such a thing as ghosts, Yagi would become one to watch over Midoriya.

Yagi let the silence rest for some time. It wasn’t exactly awkward or uncomfortable and Yagi wasn’t sure he was ready to break it. But long day or not, they needed to talk about this sooner or later. Yagi knew he was a coward but the faster he got these things out of the way the less it would hurt in the long run, he hoped.

“I’m leaving most of my money to charity,” he started. “Orphanages and a few quirkless foundations. I want to help people even after I’m gone. But most of my assets, the physical ones, my apartment, my hero suits, I suppose, and memorabilia I have lying around, my stocks, I think that should go to you. It’s not everything, but it’s enough that you’ll be well off. Enough that you can comfortably get to your feet when you enter the hero world.”

Midoriya’s mouth dropped open and in a snap, he was back to being plain old anxious Midoriya, “What!? No, you can’t give me your memorabilia or your suits! That belongs in a museum! And I can’t possibly ask you for your stocks or your apartment or any of that! And wouldn’t it be weird to publicly leave stuff to me? I’m just one student. I know we’re close but as far as the public is concerned I shouldn’t matter to you. Wouldn’t that draw a bad amount of attention? And wouldn’t it be embarrassing-”

“Midoriya!” Yagi cut in, slightly shocked. “I could never be embarrassed by you. You’re- you’re possibly the best person I’ve ever had the privilege of knowing. One of the reasons I’m doing this is so I can help announce you to the world as my successor. So… so that you can finally take my place as the pillar of peace.”

Midoriya stared up at him, eye’s shining in the afternoon light. “All Might…”

“If you aren’t ready, both Gran and Aizawa have given me their word that they will help continue your training in my place, though, I don’t doubt you. I will, however, warn you not to be too hard on them.” Yagi poked Midoriya in the side trying to keep things light. “And don’t hurt yourself too often. Recovery Girl will come after me in the grave if she needs someone else to blame for your recklessness.”

Midoriya bit his lip, thoughts passing through his eyes like ships on the sea.

Yagi tried to smile. It was fake but it was what he could manage. “And I hope you don’t mind but someone needs to take care of my plants when I’m gone, and I think you’re the man for the job.”

Midoriya didn’t respond.

“Midoriya?” Yagi asked and he reached out to squeeze his successors shoulder. “I’m sorry I can’t stay. I’m sorry I have to die.”

Yagi felt Midoriya tense. Then in a stuttering wet voice, he said, “Y-you say that like you’re going to die tomorrow. T-there’s still time. Your time isn’t over yet.”

Oh, Yagi thought, feeling a painful squeezing in his chest, it was like that. “I have a year left, Midoriya. I know that sounds like a lot but time goes by too quickly. It’ll- I’m sorry, but it’ll come sooner than you think.”

Midoriya’s eyebrows drew together like he wasn't sure what he was hearing. “All Might-Yagi, it sounds… it sounds like you’re giving up.”

Yagi smiled wanly, “There isn’t much left for me to fight, is there? All for One has been captured, my quirk is gone, and I have a very capable successor. My story is at an end.”

Midoriya burst full force into tears. So much for running out. He’d have to remember to get his successor a bottle of water so he doesn’t get dehydrated.

“You can’t do this,” Midoriya said, eyes tightly closed as tears run down his cheeks. “You can’t give up, All Might. You just can’t.”

“Midoriya,” Yagi went to touch Midoriya’s shoulder again but the boy flinched away.

“No,” Midoriya wiped at the tears on his face. “No. Heroes never give up! You can’t stand here and act like it’s over before it is. You can’t!”

“Midoriya, I’ve reached peace with death, there’s nothing wrong-”

“NO,” Midoriya sniffed again and his lip trembled. “You can’t. You just can’t. Can’t- I know it’s selfish but please just keep trying to live. For me? Please?”

“It’s not selfish,” Yagi said helplessly. “It’s not selfish to want to hold onto the people you care about. I just, the sooner you accept that I’m going to be gone the better. I don’t want to hurt-”

“It already hurts! Do you think you can stop that? You can’t! It’ll always hurt. That doesn’t mean you can give up! It’ll hurt less if I know you went down fighting. It’ll hurt less if I know you’re at least trying to fight!”

“Midoriya,” Yagi held his hands out appealingly

.

And those eyes were open again and on him, staring through him burning more painfully than fire, like metal in a forge. Yagi felt pinned down, dissected, and judged.

“I thought about it, you know!” Midoriya snapped, an expression of deep pain crossing his face. The truth serum let him hold nothing back. “Giving up. After… after you told me I couldn’t be a hero, I-I s-stared off the side of that building a-and I… I thought about jumping.”

There was a sudden roaring in Yagi's ears. Had... had he really come that close to killing his young student!?

Toshinori remembered the boy he had met only two long years ago. Pale and frail looking, a stuttering mess of a fanboy. He remembered the big hopeful eyes and he remembered the moment he crushed that hope. At the time he had thought he was doing what was right… but looking back that was probably the worst expression he had ever seen Midoriya make. He'd always said Midoriya had busy eyes. They were always alight with thoughts and warmth and hope and determination.

At that moment, when they had only known each other for a couple of minutes, when he had said a few careless words to a stranger, he remembered watching that light go out.

He… he hadn't paid attention at the time. Further proof that he wasn't good enough. Further proof that he was a failure.

Midoriya wasn't finished however and Toshinori was forced to break out of his reverie when Midoriya stepped forward, eyes now burning with tears and determination. "But I didn't! I didn't die and I saved Kacchan and you saved me and I wouldn't have any of this if I had killed myself! I would never have gotten close to the happiness I have now. I would have died without having any friends, without achieving any of my dreams and only my mother would have missed me! Dying isn't the answer!"

"Son..."

"Heroes never give up!" Midoriya shouted and the strength seemed to leave him as he broke down in heart-wrenching sobs. Midoriya collapse to his knees and Yagi was with him, thin arms wrapping around the child who seemed so small, who seemed so young.

How had things gotten to this point? It was Yagi's own fault, of course. His boy was just a child and yet here Yagi was putting more and more weight on his shoulders when the boy already carried the world.

It wasn't fair, but Yagi already knew that. He's known it for a long time, ever since he was a child and no amount of fighting would make him strong enough. Ever since he gained One For All and watched his teacher die too soon, ever since he fought All for One and has since lived with the pain in his chest and taste of blood in his mouth.

But that didn't make it hurt less.

"Don't give up," Midoriya whispered. "Please-please never give up."

"I'm sorry, Midoriya," Yagi cried too. "I-I promise, okay? I promise I'll keep fighting for you."

They sat like that for what felt like a long time. Yagi rubbed Midoriya's back and gently ran his hand through Midoriya's soft hair, soothing his crying. The sun moved through the sky and eventually Midoriya drew back and folded into himself, hugging his legs and looking calmer but also completely exhausted.

Yagi likewise felt exhausted but part of him knew if he closed this conversation now, between his nervousness and Midoriya's stubbornness, he'd never be able to reopen it.

"How long have you been depressed, son?"

Midoriya's eyes briefly widened and then he closed them and rested his head on his knees. "Can we please not do this right now, Yagi, please?"

Yagi rubbed Midoriya's back. "You know it's important."

Midoriya gave a tired sigh and gradually relaxed his muscles refusing to look at Yagi and instead went back to staring off the roof. With a start, Yagi understood that it wasn't just for the view, that the roof probably wasn't his safe place after all.

"Yeah, I know," he said in a deadened tone. "Can you just- um- can you not talk or look at me when I say all of this? I've never told anyone this but I don't think the truth quirk will let

me not say it. It kinda… hurts to keep silent or lie. God, why did I take the tape off my mouth? I could have just skipped lunch. I could have just-"

"You can't consent?" Yagi realized with slight horror. "Then I take it back you don't have to tell me anything. You can just come to me when you're ready I would never make you-"

Midoriya gave a quiet laugh at Yagi's reaction. "I thought I was supposed to be the flustered one," he said tiredly. He shook his head. "I still feel the burn in my throat and I… I think I need to get this out of my system anyway. One crack and the floodgates open, right?"

Yagi clasped his hands in front of him. His boy wasn't wrong.

"I'll keep quiet," he promised. Midoriya looked grateful but also resigned to his fate. He laid down and stared up at the sky. After clearing some blood from his throat, Yagi followed suit.

"It's hard to say when my depression started for sure. It's not clear I was happy and then one day I just became really sad cut off. Even after I found out I was quirkless, I wasn't immediately permanently sad. It was more gradual than that. I mean after I found out I was definitely sad and then my friends started bullying me and the adults started treating me like I couldn't do anything and my mom was always sad and stressed out so yeah, I had a lot more reasons to be sad than before but like I could always watch your videos or get hero merch or my mom would make me katsudon or my shirt-shirts and I'd feel happy again. Kacchan didn't even immediately kick me out of the group or anything so I could still follow him and go hiking sometimes. I wasn't immediately depressed. It was more like things started to build up over time, you know? Stuff that used to make me happy didn't make me as happy as before because all the bad stuff outweighed it."

Yagi, unfortunately, did know. These last five years had been hard on him as he became more isolated and more worthless to the world.

"I-I still had my love for heroes though. I still had analysis. I could lose myself in passion and everything else didn't matter as much. I know it sounds stupid. Until you, Aizawa and Nedzu no one's taken my analysis seriously. It was just me being nerdy and creepy or a fanboy. It's kinda hard to have your passion spat on. One time, you know the day we met? Kacchan blew up my notebook and threw it in the koi pond. That was the notebook you signed. I still have it actually. But anyway, I know it's silly and it's just a notebook but that actually hurt more than

anything else he said that day because I mean I put so much work into it and he just treated my hard work like it was complete garbage. But then again he thought I was complete garbage too so I guess it's to be expected?"

Every time Yagi hears about Bakugou's bullying of his pupil it seems to get worse and worse. Yagi believes in Bakugou's potential but Midoriya's and his path just keep getting darker. Yagi wonders if he needs to have another heart to heart with the student. Yagi wonders if there is anything he can do to help the boy become better than what he used to be. Bakugo was just a child and deserved a second chance, after all, but that doesn't mean he isn't responsible for his actions. Yagi dearly wished he was better at emotions. Maybe he could sic Gran on him, Gran was always good beating bad thought processes out of his head.

"But yeah, it could have been a lot worse, right? And things have gotten loads better since then. Now I have friends, and I'm helping people and I'm living my dreams. Sure, villains attack every couple of days, but I knew that was what I was getting into when I decided to become a hero. I've been happy much more often than I used to and it's all thanks to you."

"I'd be lying if I didn't admit that I still have bad days though. Sometimes it feels like I'm suffocating and there's just all this pressure to be good and heroic and kind and to smile. I love my friends, I know they'd try to understand, but I'm also kind of terrified of what would happen if I did tell what was wrong with me. I've been burned before and I know my anxiety and depression can make me seem really creepy and weird. I know I'm not like everyone else and I'm kind of scared that at any moment my friends might notice I'm not like them and reject me. So I kinda keep my weirdness bottled up but now they know about Bakugo and that I hate myself and I can't face them because I don't know what it'd do if I went back to having no friends. I have faith in them. They're the kindest people I know but… why are they kind to me? Why would I be worth anything to them?"

Yagi had to bite his tongue to keep from responding and comforting his boy. He'd promised to keep quiet and he kept his promises. Still, there were tears running down his cheeks. His successor's gone through so much.

"I just… sometimes it all seems so pointless you know. I know why I'm here, I know why I want to be here. Helping people is probably the only thing that seems to make me truly happy but sometimes it all just seems to be so pointless. No one wants my help. I get yelled at for helping people. Every mess I manage to clean up either makes more messes or uncovers worse things under the surface and meanwhile I just keep on breaking myself over and over again. It's worth it. I know that going through the pain and the darkness helps other people grow but sometimes I'm just so sick of it. I hate hurting and I hate worrying my mother and

disappointing you. I hate having to hear Recovery Girl give me the same speech every time I see her and getting those panicked worried hugs from my friends when I return from some disaster."

"I have to be strong, and the thank you's I get from the people I help makes it worth it, but sometimes… sometimes I'm just so tired and I just kinda wanna stop existing for a while. Not forever and nothing as permanent as death. I just want to live in a world that doesn't know I exist for a while. A world where I can rest and no one would miss me. Things would just carry on as normal and none of you would be hurt or scared by my disappearance. I just won't be there anymore and everything would be okay."

"I'm not stupid though. I know nothing short of a miracle quirk could do that, and a quirk like that would have a cost too heavy to pay. So I have to stay strong." Midoriya's face scrunched with fresh tears. "Sometimes it's just so hard though. I- I feel like I have to be strong every day of my life and it just keeps getting harder and I know I can't afford to be weak but I know that I can't be strong like this forever."

"Midoriya," Yagi couldn't stop himself. Midoriya sniffed. "You know the solution to that problem right?" Yagi had been told so many times. "You have to share that weight, my boy, no one can carry the world alone, but among friends, among your fellow heroes and fellow man, your burden gets lighter."

Midoriya sniffed again, "Easier said than done." Yagi knew that too well. "I wish I could trust people like that. I wish it were that easy… but in my experience… in my experience sharing my pain only hurts people."

"My boy," Yagi said sitting up and coughing as the blood in his chest shifted. "My boy, the pain that we feel when you share your suffering isn't the kind of pain that comes from an injury. When you suffer, we cry because you're in pain. Because we care about you and it hurts to see you in pain. That's not your fault or your responsibility. Just as one spread the weight of the world onto each person's shoulders, so one must do with pain or grief. You should not have to carry your sadness alone when I, - we are here to help you."

Midoriya made a small keening choking sob. The noise was unattractive but only Yagi was around to hear it and he would never tell. Finally, Midoriya was up and hugging him and Yagi was providing the comfort only a father could give.

It was kind of funny. Yagi didn't know when he started thinking of Midoriya as a son, but here he was. He'd put off the thought long enough. He loved this boy more than anything and he would protect him with all his might.

Midoriya wiped his face. "I-I'm sorry for all this. Crying all over you and all. It was a long day right?"

"Midoriya," Yagi said seriously. "You know I'm always here when you need someone to talk to or someone to share your pain with. I truly care about you."

Midoriya nodded tearfully. "Same to you. All Might- Yagi-san you can come to me too if you need to."

Yagi ruffled his curls. "Hey, smile, kid. I think we've had enough of this sadness, why don't we go get some ice cream, my treat. You also ought to wash your face and get some water in you. Crying so much can't be healthy."

Midoriya gave an exhausted laugh. "Yeah, yeah that sounds nice."

As they walked out the roof access and down the stairs, Yagi couldn't help but wonder, "Midoriya have you ever considered therapy?"

His student blinked up at him looking slightly puzzled. "I'm already seeing the school psychologist, All Might. Haven't you been told?"

Yagi spewed a jet of blood. "Since when!?"

Midoriya tilted his head, though he did regard the blood with concern. "Students are required to see the school counselor after every event that could qualify as 'traumatic' so I've already been seeing him regularly because of that but also when Nedzu took me on as a student it was recommended that I start seeing a psychologist on a weekly basis. Tuesday and Thursday evenings. I thought all my teachers knew."

“Oh,” Yagi said. He really needed to pay closer attention to his email. “Has it helped?”

Midoriya shrugged. “I don’t know. Sometimes it feels like it does, sometimes it doesn’t. Um… Yagi?”

“Yes?”

“Thank you.”

Chapter End Notes

This chapter kicked my ass. To be honest, my grandma recently died and I might be venting but I think this chapter has been a long way coming.

-for those who don't read the comments last chapter is the start of a four-shot
- All Might’s curse of bad timing is sadly completely in character
-I thought it’d be a bit funny that Midoriya was scheduled to see the school psychologist the same days he sees Nedzu.
-As far as the depression talk goes, I’ve lived with MDD my entire life and will always suggest therapy.
I have a metaphor that I like; your brain and thought processes are a bit like plumbing, sometimes your pipes get leaky and messed up and right now all you have to fix things is duct tape (unhealthy coping mechanisms) and sure that might work for a while but since things aren’t actually getting fixed, leaks will continue to break through and you’ll continue to apply duct tape until you’ve got an entire mess of leaky pipes, rotten tape and if things get bad enough, a burst pipe.

Therapy is basically learning to be a plumber. It gives you the faculties to see what the real problems are and it gives you the tools to fix them. Sure, it takes time and works to learn but once you have those tools, you’ll be also to fix your existing problems and you’ll be more capable of maintaining your present and future mental health. You’ll be able to better recognize issues when they come up and avoid pitfalls you might otherwise fall into. It helps and, believe me, it is absolutely worth it.

Even if you don’t think you’re mentally ill I recommend learning about psychology. It’s good to know and might still help you when it comes to understanding yourself or a loved one. And if you can’t find or afford a therapist, at least pick up a book. Sometimes it’s scary how specific and accurate they can be.

discord: https://discord.gg/SEkN8ee

tumblr: https://amarelibertius.tumblr.com/

He's Basically a Janitor

Chapter by serenawitchwriter

Chapter Summary

Aizawa doesn't deserve this mess

Chapter Notes

part 3 of the four-shot

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“What do you mean you didn’t even know he was missing?” Aizawa said pinching the bridge of his nose. “Okay, whatever, is he okay?”

Aizawa silently listened to All Might’s reply. He sighed. Then he froze as All Might said something he wasn’t expecting. “He opened up to you?”

Small miracles. “Okay, you do that, just tape Midoriya's mouth shut if you're taking him around other people and for the love of god, All Might, stay with him.”

Aizawa held the phone away from his ear when he got a too loud reply. He hung up.

Okay. Now for the hard part.

He returned to his office, outside of which sat half of his class all silent and split into groups. The ‘Bakusquad’ was gathered around a crying Kirishima. Uraraka and Todoroki were flanking Iida and occasionally shooting glares at Bakugou. Bakugou was looking mainly isolated as no one sat by him and only looked at him when they were glaring. Aizawa heaved a large internal sigh.

“He was found. He’s fine. All Might is looking after him.” he said flatly.

A sigh of relief went through the entire group, and Uraraka perked up. “Can we see him?”

“In a bit but first I have to get to the bottom of this first. You first,” Aizawa said, pointing at Mina. She looked absolutely terrified. Good.

After Ashido went through the story from her perspective, Aizawa closed his eyes and rubbed his temples.

“You’re telling me,” the teacher drawled slowly. “That your classmate was hit with an invasive quirk, and you decided to use that to your advantage to invade his privacy?”

Ashido started. “It wasn’t like that!” she said waving her hands frantically. “It was just a bit of fun. I didn’t want things to go that far, we were just goofing around.”

Aizawa gave here a dry look that could peel paint. “Were you aware that the particular truth quirk Midoriya was hit with causes pain to the victim? That not telling the truth, especially when asked a direct question, makes his throat burn and prickle like there are needles in it.”

Ashido significantly paled, and her shoulder slumped. “Oh,” she said guiltily, “He didn’t act like it hurt.”

Aizawa didn’t blink. Ashido squirmed.

“Even if it didn’t hurt him, he couldn’t consent to give the information you asked of him.” Aizawa finally said, voice cold. “Do you understand the importance of consent, Ms. Ashido? You understand that under different circumstances your actions could be considered against the law.”

Ashido looked thoroughly horrified and guilty now. Aizawa continued to glare at her, making sure she understood the seriousness of the situation.

"You need to start thinking out the consequences of your actions before you make them. You need to think about the effects your actions have on others. Forethought is one of the most important tools a hero has in their arsenal."

"Y-you aren't going to expel me, are you?" Ashido asked in a tiny voice.

Aizawa let the silence drag after her question. He watched her mounting fear with apathy. "No," he finally said. "I only expel those with zero potential. You have not yet proven that low yet." Ashido instantly perked up. "But," she tensed again, "You will be serving detention with me and pull double cleaning duty. I also expect a five-page essay on similar cases of harassment as your assault today. And how exactly they went by the end of the week."

Ashido jolted the promise of extra homework a harsh enough punishment for someone like her. Maybe this time she'd actually learn something.

However, Aizawa leaned forward in his seat and stared her down one last time to make sure he was as clear as possible. "And… I'll be keeping a very ***close*** eye on you. If we meet like this again, you will not be getting another chance."

Ashido gulped. "Yes, sir."

Aizawa didn't bother telling her to apologize to Midoriya. The apology wouldn't mean anything if he made her do it and if she were worth anything she wouldn't need to be told to do it anyway. He was sure she was already planning to apologize the next time she saw to the boy. She's probably also going to do something stupid and over the top to make things up to him.

His conversation with Kaminari and Sero went much the same way.

Next came Kirishima.

Who was crying...

Ugh...

Aizawa held out a box of tissue. “Can you tell me what happened?”

Kirishima sniffed loudly. But he told a similar story to his two friends, but he seemed to understand better than the other three how much he must have hurt Midoriya. He also seemed to be personally troubled by the Bakugou issue, having believed better of his friend.

“It’s just…” Kirishima looked down. “I used to be bullied too, so I know how it feels like I’ve been there, or well, it never got that bad, but even though Bakugou was kinda rude and loud, I knew he had a nice guy underneath it all. But I nice guy wouldn’t do something like that. He wouldn’t hurt someone like that. He should be better than that…”

Kirishima sniffed again tears still flowing, and he looked entirely too guilty and sad for Aizawa to adequately punish yet. But he wasn’t the victim here, and he should know it.

Rubbing his brow bone Aizawa tried not to verbally groan. “People aren’t perfect, Kirishima,” he said gruffly. “They often fail our expectations. Sooner or later you either have to learn to lower them or drop the people who fail to meet them. It doesn’t matter how highly you think of someone. Sometimes what you think and who they are don’t line up, and you can’t hold yourself responsible for that.”

Kirishima pouted and good damn it Aizawa was surrounded by too many pure people. He didn't have time for this.

"But… but I still wanna be friends with Bakugou… is that wrong?"

Aizawa let out a drawn-out sigh. "*Is* it?"

Kirishima hesitated. "I… I don't know, sir."

"Then figure it out," Aizawa said flatly. "You have detention with the rest of your friends and a paper on consent laws. I don't want to see you here again."

Kirishima looked startled at the abrupt ending of the conversation, but with a small thoughtful nod he got up and left. The reality was that Aizawa had no idea how to solve his complicated interpersonal problem and didn't particularly want to deal with. Placing the ball in his court was the best he could do, and usually the right choice in his experience.

"Next person."

Uraraka and Todoroki weren't in trouble because they were the only ones trying to de-escalate the situation. He could see both of them were bitter and defensive of their friend and he had to take some time to defuse their anger.

Todoroki's expression had been closed off entirely for the first time since the sports festival, and it was a startling difference. Beyond answering direct questions, he was utterly silent, and he kept his answers short and to the point.

The only point when he broke from that was to ask where Midoriya was. Aizawa said with all might, and the safest thing to do was wait in the common room until he returned.

With a sharp nod, Todoroki left without being dismissed.

Uraraka was on the opposite side of the spectrum and was pacing and ranting and also crying and waving her hands around and occasionally making things in his office float. Apparently, she'd been holding in her anger until this moment.

Aizawa didn't know why he was the person people seemed to rant to. This wasn't the first time a student ranted at him. And every teacher except All Might has ranted at him before. Sometimes villains ranted at him. He has a tough life.

"...and that dirty slimeball! I decided to give him a chance! After I was beginning to actually like him! I-I thought the bullying was just usual teasing! Normal Bakugou! It's just the way he talks! But this is abusive! He's been abusing my best friend for years, and I didn't even realize it! How could I not realize!? And of course, Izuku didn't say anything because he's too kind and forgiving and oh god! Isn't that a sign. Like Stockholm syndrome or something. He's so used to the abuse that he just accepts it. He said he hates himself. Oh god, I'm such an awful friend! Why can't Izuku just talk to me, not that I'd know what to do, but it's better than just holding it in and he couldn't even come to me on his own! It had to be that stupid truth quirk. He must be so upset right now, and I don't even know what I can do to help him.

"How can he even hate himself? I don't understand it. He's perfect. He's the kindest, bravest, smartest person I know. And to think all this time Bakugou's been shitting on him. Shiting on his hard work and bravery and kindness like it's worthless. I can't believe- agh! I've been calling Izuku that name all this time! Worthless. Bakugou's name. I mean I know he accepted it and decided to change the meaning, but now it just feels so dirty. Because Midoriya isn't worthless! He's worth a thousand Bakugou's! And…"

Uraraka stopped.

"And he's the Deku who can do it."

Abruptly the fight seemed to go out of her, and she thankfully lowered all the levitating objects gently down. "Sorry, Aizawa-sensei," she said calmly. "I guess I'm stupid." she got a misty look. "Deku's been fighting to get better all this time. The best thing I can do is keep supporting him."

She nodded her head in determination and pumped her fist in the air. “I will! Thank you Aizawa-sensei!”

And then she just left.

Aizawa didn’t even have to say anything.

Now for the hard customers.

Iida immediately bowed and apologized and offered to resign as class president when he walked into the office. This was not surprising.

“I don’t think I’m the one that needs the apology, kid,” Aizawa said regarding the boy with exasperation.

“Right,” Iida still in a ninety-degree bow. “I intend to apologize to Midoriya the next time I see him.”

Aizawa raised an eyebrow. “And Bakugou?”

Iida flushed. “I’m sorry, sir, but I cannot do that.”

That was slightly unexpected. At least Iida stuck to his guns, but this was going to make things more complicated than expected. Aizawa figured Bakugou would be the only one he would have to fight when it came to settling their differences and deciding punishment. But it appeared Iida had a more stubborn side than he let on. “Have a seat.”

Iida rose from his bow and sat down so stiffly that Aizawa could imagine the boy had metal rods throughout his body. He was tired of just looking at him. “Do you wanna tell me what

happened?”

And Iida did. Only he was more angry and impassioned then anyone yet. Iida admitted to punching Bakugou without any hesitation or shame. He actually still seemed angry. He seemed genuinely upset with himself for putting Midoriya in the situation he did, but everything else Aizawa could tell he would do again.

Aizawa decided to get up and poured some tea. “Iida. how would you feel seeing that scene as an outsider?”

Iida blinked. Then he looked down eyebrows drawing together. “I suppose I come out looking rather poor in that light. But Bakugou deserved it.”

“Why exactly does it reflect badly on you?” Aizawa asked patiently.

Iida frown deepened. “Because I was the one who struck first… and I ignored Midoriya’s wished to satisfy my own anger….”

“Were your actions that of a hero?”

“I… no…” Iida’s shoulders slumped slightly.

“Were your actions that of a friend?”

“No, sir,” Iida said looking entirely guilty now.

The problematic thing with people of like Iida was that they acted with such earnestness that it was difficult to call them on their faults. Well, at least without sending them into a guilt spiral. Iida’s type was also known to be too hard on themselves.

“So what would you do differently?”

There was a long stretch of silence as Iida considered his answer.

“I don’t know, sir,” Iida said quietly.

Aizawa let out a long sigh. He knew he couldn’t rush realizations like the one Iida needed to have. “Think on it,” he said, feeling tired. “Since this is a first-time offense on an otherwise impeccable record, I’ll let you off with a warning and a weeks detention.”

“Sir!” Iida gasped eyes filling with tears.

“And you can keep your presidential position.” Aizawa could admit that Iida kept a better eye on his class then he did. “But no more fights outside of training.”

“But sir i-”

Aizawa cut him off with a glare. “You will not do this again.”

“I…” Iida opened his mouth for a long moment. Then he closed it again. “Yes, sir. I’m sorry for the trouble.”

Aizawa dismissed him, having the gut feeling he would need to keep an eye on the boy.

Aizawa wasn’t allowed to admit that had he been in Iida's position when he was a teenager, he may have decked the boy himself.

And finally the man of the hour, the messiest fifteen-year-old Aizawa had ever met; Bakugou walks in, pants sagging, mouth glowering at the world.

Aizawa gave the boy a long silent considering look. He was guarded of course, but in Aizawa's opinion, the boy didn't know how to hide his emotions to save his life. There was a surprising amount of guilt and resentment. Perhaps even some notes of betrayal. It was all laid out in how he carried himself the set of his eyes, his inability to make eye contact the pout of his lip. He was more bothered by this fight than he wanted anyone to know.

They sat in silence long enough for Bakugou to start to get fidgety and when Aizawa decided that he was sufficiently uncomfortable he asked, "I've heard some interesting stories today, Bakugou, do you want to tell me yours?"

Bakugou scoffed. "They all already told you, didn't they? I'm the bad guy, Deku's the perfect little angel, and you're going to expel me for a mistake I made fucking two years ago because I was a stupid twerp who didn't think things through. Just get it over with, asshole. Why even fucking pretend this isn't what's happening? People have been saying it from the start. I'm a fucking villain."

Aizawa regarded his student carefully. Aizawa considered himself if anything a rational man. And in a world of such chaos and violence at times he found it difficult to keep such a level head. He wasn't stupid. Bakugou wasn't a villain, and he didn't have zero potential. Over the last year, he had grown considerably.

But he had also made many, many mistakes. Mistakes that the school has been far too indulgent of. What he had done, telling someone to kill themselves, even if it had been two years ago, it was a crime. An arrestable offense if Midoriya had followed through. And more and more the consequences of his abuse were shining through in Midoriya's actions and personality. He'd hurt another human being in ways that no one ever should be.

Aizawa nodded solemnly. "I don't see why I shouldn't."

Bakugou started crying. They were bitter tears. Tears he was apparently trying to suppress but tears all the same.

“You understand why what you did was wrong?”

“It was just Deku,” he said venomously. “He would never go through with it.”

Aizawa felt a swell of disgust. “And why do you think that?”

“Because I know him,” Bakugou suddenly loudly snapped. “He’s too stubborn and stupid to do anything that anyone tells him to. The entire world has been telling him to give up since the moment he was born and yet here that fucker is at UA. He’s always pissed on anything anyone says to him. Why would this be any different?”

Aizawa leveled a blank look at the student. “And if he did do it?”

“He wouldn’t,” Bakugou said petulantly.

“But if he did?”

Bakugou didn’t meet his eyes.

Aizawa sighed through his nose.“You’ve proven in the past to be a smart boy, Bakugou. So please explain to me the pattern I see emerging. You yell and attack Midoriya. Midoriya fights back. You take things too far. Midoriya leaves injured either by his own action or yours.”

“He’s injured me back,” Bakugou cut in. Even though he apparently knew the difference between their injuries.

“Just how many times have you broken Midoriya, Bakugou?” Aizawa hissed.

Bakugou stared at Aizawa as if he was crazy. “Never! Don’t you get it? He never fucking breaks. That’s his whole fucking problem. That’s why I-” Bakugou abruptly cut himself off and looked away.

Aizawa, however, caught the scent. “That’s why you hate him,” Aizawa finished.

Bakugou scoffed and crossed his arms over his chest but didn’t deny it. Aizawa blinked slowly at him, a puzzle piece clicking into place in the spot that’s been waiting for it.

“Then I have one final question for you, Bakugou,” Aizawa said setting down his mug and steeping his fingers. “How do you know you haven’t been breaking him?”

Bakugou looks slightly taken aback for a moment, then puzzled. “What the hell is that supposed to mean?”

“Things don’t have to shatter to be broken, Bakugou,” Aizawa said clearly, knowing this moment might be important for the boy going forward. “Sometimes it's cracked. Over and over again until they’ve spiderwebbed through every little thing. Cracks or shattered, it’s still broken, Bakugou.”

Aizawa saw the moment Bakugou got it. The way his eyes widened and his mouth dropped open. The way his eyebrows drew together, and he lost himself in thought, likely memory.

Aizawa cleared his throat and regained Bakugou’s attention. “I’ll be calling your mom, of course. The paperwork will have to pass through Nedzu, but until then you’ll be suspended. We’ll have someone pick you up today., you should be able to pick up your things this weekend...”

The reality of his situation seemed to return all at once, and the boy’s shoulders slumped. It was like the fight had gone out of him. For a boy so full of energy and drive it was eerie.

But suddenly there was the sound of running footsteps, and suddenly Midoriya burst through the door eyes burning with determination, tape on his mouth.

He tried to talk, quickly realized his mistake and ripped the tape off his mouth. He then took a moment to wince and rub the skin around his mouth. Aizawa and Bakugou watched him incredulously.

Finally, Midoriya spoke, “You can’t expel, Bakugou! The evidence for the supposed crime was gotten under methods of cohesion, and I’m not pressing charges. Moreover said crime took place somewhere else, over two years ago and I’d have to check the statute of limitations on that kinda crime, but I’m pretty sure all that makes this out of the school’s jurisdiction. You have no right to expel him.”

Aizawa wanted to slam his head against his desk. Uuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuugh. Why do his students insist on making things harder than they need to be?

Bakugou had a look somewhere between angry and constipated and confused.

“Midoriya, if what I understand about your past is true, and given the amount of violence I have personally witnessed between you I don’t doubt what I’ve learned,” Aizawa said tiredly. “What possible reason can you have to continue being classmates? Shouldn’t you hate him or something? I am exhausted.”

Midoriya’s eyes shined brightly. “He’s been getting better, Sensei. I don’t care about our past. Bakugou’s had my admiration for years.”

“ *Why?* ” Bakugou said like even he couldn’t understand it. He’d definitely come a long way from the beginning of the year.

“You’re trying. Even when you’re at your worst or meanest and craziest, you’re always trying to get better. You’re always fighting to be a hero despite what anyone says, despite how you feel. Despite your mistakes. You’re always trying. Sometimes…” Midoriya bit his lip and a complex range of emotions passed through his eyes before he looked back up. “Sometimes it

gives me hope. So please, Aizawa-Sensei." Midoriya turned to the teacher, "Don't expel him."

Ughhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh. This time Aizawa actually dropped his head onto his desk.

More pieces fell into place, and Aizawa hated it. It was like some kind of messed up form of codependency. Why did Midoriya have to be so freaking nice? It'd be so much easier if Midoriya just hated Bakugou and let that be the end of it.

Instead, the problem child had to actually make sense and point actual laws and stuff. The reality was that Aizawa could expel anyone he wanted regardless of the law. But Midoriya had made sense in another way.

Bakugou has been making progress and punishing someone who's making progress would likely destroy said progress. Bakugou left to his own devices outside of school, with his dreams crushed and some newly fed self-loathing would be a disaster waiting to happen. Aizawa like to believe he was good at thinking ahead. It was more a matter of which was safer; Bakugou the failed hero student or Bakugou the 'hero' with the power of a hero license to do as he pleased.

The best plan in all of this would be the one that ensured his development into a mentally healthy, responsible hero. Which meant keeping him in the hero course and breaking him of all of his bad habits. The same plan as before.

Only now it left a bad taste in his mouth, knowing how far Bakugou was willing to go.

Aizawa looked into Midoriya's eyes. He saw more exhaustion than Aizawa himself felt, but also unwavering determination.

"Ugh, fine, he can stay," Aizawa said throwing up his hands in frustrated surrender. "But he still needs to be punished."

“WHAT!?” Bakugou said reacting more to that than he did to the news that he was going to get expelled. He was a complicated fellow.

Midoriya burst into happy tears. For the love of God, where did they all come from?

Bakugou stared back and forth between Aizawa and Midoriya. Then gesturing at Midoriya and somehow filling his word with twelve years worth of frustration he shouted: *“I don’t **get YOU** !”*

And then he stormed out of the room. Which meant Aizawa would have to track him down again later to give him his real punishment. Great.

All Might stumbled in after he left, blood seeping through his teeth. “You have to slow down a bit for an old man like me, Midoriya,” he coughed. “I can’t keep up like I used too.”

“Oh, sorry, All Might. I didn’t mean to stress you out, it’s just when you said Aizawa-Sensei was going to talk to Bakugou I got a bad feeling and had to rush here before something bad happened. I guess I kinda forgot you were with me. It wasn’t anything personal though-”

“Midoriya,” Aizawa held up a hand, feeling entirely done with everything. “Unless you want to give me a report on what happened today, Please shut up.”

“Ah! Sorry, sir.”

Reaching into his desk, he pulled out a roll of duct tape and tossed it to the boy, who fumbled to catch it. With understandable reluctance but also resignation, he pulled off a piece and dutifully stuck it over his mouth.

“I’ll escort you back to the dorm.” He had a substitute for everyone else in his class, and he needed to get out of this bloody office already. Midoriya timidly followed, and All Might tagged along too even though it wouldn’t need the two of them. As they walked Aizawa

considered punishments that might help Bakugou somehow it was a glance into one of the lower hallways that got him thinking. He caught a glimpse of Mirio.

A creepy smile curled his lips. Midoriya and All Might immediately took a few steps away from him. Ah, but the punishment could wait for later.

When they got back to the dorm an entire group of kids was waiting for them, all the kids he'd just taken too in fact. Aizawa was pretty sure he'd told them to go back to class, but meh, it must have slipped his mind. It didn't help that a third of them had just rushed out of the room before he could adequately dismiss them. Ah well, this seemed important anyway.

Midoriya walked in and did his shy little wave. More than half of the present classmates burst into tears and rushed forward to hug him and apologize. Of course, Midoriya burst into tears right back and All Might, the caring person that he was, went to get him a bottle of water.

Aizawa kept careful watch however and noticed how Iida hung back a pensive look on his face. He saw how Bakugou came in and went utterly ignored. He watched as Bakugou tried to catch Kirishima's eye.

And he watched as Kirishima intentionally avoided eye contact.

Chapter End Notes

-Bakugou almost said he admired deku :3
-i'm generally not a fan of return to status quo chapters, but since this is a one shot series i need to be able to write without constantly referencing back to other chapters, so here's hoping i can wrap things up next chapter but keep the character development.
-me: I wanna give Bakugou permanent consequences for his actions, but I don't actually want to write him out of the fic
Deku: *kicks down the door* don't do it, Aizawa!
Me: ok then.

Discord:
https://discord.gg/SEkN8ee
Tumblr:
https://amarelibertius.tumblr.com/

Art:
https://amarelibertius.tumblr.com/post/175587842594/erisdraws-fan-art-for-the-darker-sides-of-deku-on
https://amarelibertius.tumblr.com/post/175419048814/amarelibertius-goth-aoyama-from-the-darker

Help

Chapter by serenawitchwriter

Chapter Summary

Heroes can't mind their own business

Chapter Notes

warning: emotional roller coaster ahead.

four-shot finale

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Midoriya has always been a busy body. It’s not something he can really help. It’s a mixture of his anxiety, his desire to help, and the fact no one wanted him around. It was hard not to stick your nose where you weren’t wanted when no one wanted you around. And okay, so maybe he was trying too hard to be wanted, to prove that he could help, to prove he could do something. But it was kinda part of who he is at this point.

All might was the first to say his noseyness was a good thing. But before that midoriya had countless examples where he helped people and made the world a better place even if people got mad at him for involving himself. Sometimes he’d get nods from the neighbors or strangers he’d briefly helped. The world wasn’t as mean of a place as people seemed to think it was.

When he’s nice, people are usually nice back and Midoriya lived for those moments, those sometimes grateful smiles, those brief compliments, or pats on his head. The kids he rescued from bullying were slightly nicer to him. His neighbors he helped with pets or gardening or babysitting or carrying groceries said hi to him and sometimes offer him tea or snacks. A few strangers gave him cards if he ever needed a favors.

It was nice.

Sometimes it got him messy, the time he ended up covered in red paint and briefly after that purple slime sprang to mind. Sometimes it didn't pay off. He'd been beaten up countless times, not just by Kacchan, for getting involved in things that weren't his business. He'd lost money, clothes, blood, and so many tears to his desire to help. But every smile made it worth it.

So when he noticed that Kacchan and Kirishima weren't talking, he couldn't leave it alone.

That truth quirk had dragged too much dark things into the open. He was already doing his best to manage Iida guilt complex (the irony that he, someone with a guilt complex, was helping with that was not lost on him). He was also trying to mitigate the damage that had happened to the Bakusquad and get people to stop ignoring Kacchan. A task that was more difficult because Kacchan refused to be in the same room as him apart from class.

To make matters worse everyone seemed to be treating him with kid gloves. Like him having emotional breakdowns was something new or something. It was beyond frustrating. His friends had closed in him like a pack of wild dogs guarding their territory. And everyone kept giving him the *look* . Pity. Even though no one said anything, Midoriya knew the whole class had heard what happened. Kachhan's black eye, which he refused to get healed by Recovery Girl, was evidence enough.

But Midoriya hadn't been through eleven years of hell (he didn't count this last year at ua) to become a quitter.

He *needed* to fix this.

For all his training with Nedzu, Midoriya was not subtle about his desire...

And his friends did not approve.

When they first got wind that he was trying to help again, they had all ganged up at him at once until Aizawa yelled at them for making him look like a cornered baby deer. It was was embarrassing but didn't come near his top ten most embarrassing moments so he was gonna try and let go of it because apparently having a list like that was bad for his anxiety? And hyper-focusing on moments where his classmates see him pathetically cry only made them seem worse than they are? Midoriya couldn't fault the school counselor's logic but it still felt fake somehow.

So his friends decided to divide and conquer. Midoriya couldn't fault them for trying to protect him but it felt like they were being over the top. Especially because Kacchan was already intentionally avoiding him.

For instance;

Tsuyu wouldn't let him leave the common room when Kacchan headed to the gym. Midoriya was going to follow but in what became an elaborate game of leap frog, kept jumping in front of every exit Midoriya went for, even the windows. If it weren't so irritating it would have been kinda fun. He knew nothing short of using his quirk would break this stubborn standoff.

It did go on longer than it would have if it weren't a battle between two of the most stubborn kids in class. People underestimated Tsuyu. He didn't.

Eventually it became a bit like that cat video where the cat kept reaching for the food and the own kept pushing the paw away. He was the cat. That means he would be the winner!

"Midoriya," Tsuyu said and she did the Tsuyu equivalent of a pout, which was really just frowning a little, but Midoriya crumbled completely.

"That's low," Midoriya muttered meeting Tsyuu's blank stare. Then he finally sighed. "So they sent you after me first?"

Tsuyu shrugged. He'd always had a deep respect for her. She was honest in ways he could never manage to be, both to others and herself. She also had a down to earth kind of wisdom that he appreciate in light of his anxiety. When his brain was being particularly over the top

she's always cut through his nonsense with a few blunt words. They rarely hung out on their own but he still considered her one of his best friends.

"They figured I'm the best suited for this. Apparently, I have the most level head and I'm least likely to let my emotions get the better of me."

"Apparently?" he repeated.

"I am mad," she said tone barely changing. Scary. "I've felt Bakugou was a toxic person for a while now. How he treats you and others isn't healthy for anyone involved. The way you act around him isn't healthy either and as your friend I think you should cut yourself off from him completely."

"What!?" Midoriya gasped, "But we've know each other since we were little kids. And he's been getting better. Even if we aren't exactly friends he's still-"

"I don't think you understood what I mean," Tsuyu carefully cut him off. "One of the reasons I think you should distance yourself from him is that you've been attached at the hip all your life. Like him or not, you don't have a clear perspective on him because you've never had the space to look at the big picture."

Oof. One of the reasons he liked Tsuyu was her ability to get to the heart of the problem but sometimes it freaking hurt. "It's not like I want to be attached at the hip," he muttered timidly.

Tsuyu nodded in understanding. "It's hard to distance yourself when he keeps pulling you back in. I've noticed that Bakugou doesn't like being ignored. But that's one of the things that makes this an abusive cycle. No one is 100% bad all the time and I acknowledge that Bakugou is actually working through his issues, but that doesn't make what he's done to you and others any less abusive. You can't keep making excuses for him, Midoriya. You can't fix him and all you're doing by defending him is enabling him and hurting yourself."

"I'm not enabling him!" Midoriya said, eyes going wide. "I'm not even trying to fix him. I'm just trying to help."

Tsuyu gave him one of her long empty stares, the kind that told him she was staring into his soul. “Midoriya, I don’t think this is something you can help with. You’re already in the middle of it, so anything you do will just make things messier. If anything you’re the one who needs help the most.”

Midoriya shook his head. “A person can always help.” he said determinedly.

“Kero,” Tsuyu said softly, almost sadly. Midoriya did his best to smile to make her feel better and instead of looking relieved Tsuyu moved forward and hugged him. “You don’t have to do things alone you know. We can help too.”

Midoriya didn’t respond caught up in the warmth of the gesture. (Her skin was actually abnormally cold and the analytic part of his brain wondered about her normal body temperature). Midoriya wasn’t stupid enough to discount what she was saying. He’s known what Kacchan was doing was wrong for about as long as Kacchan’s been treating him like shit. He wasn’t so far in denial that he didn’t understand that the bullying was abusive.

But he had a handle on it and moreover he didn’t need anyone’s pity. He wasn’t so weak that he couldn’t handle this on his own.

He hugged her for a little longer anyway.

His next attempt to go after Kacchan was foiled by Shinsou.

Midoriya was trying to follow Kacchan down the hall during lunch period and Shinsou said “Nope.” and grabbed Midoriya around the shoulders and waist like a koala bear, apparently expecting Midoriya to fall down under his weight because of their size difference. Except in typical Shinsou fashion he was not in the loop of how strong Midoriya was without his quirk, despite the school wide contest to beat him, and literally being their when Midoriya lifted him and seven other friends above his head the other day. did he assume midoriya was using his quirk that day?

Anyway, instead of falling down like he was expected to, Midoriya ended up awkwardly giving the taller student a piggyback ride. Jesus, his legs were long. They were sticking out straight forward like a whole mile. Midoriya wondered what it like to be tall. All Might lifted him up like he was Simba in the Lion King once but it wasn't the same.

"What the heck?" Shinsou said sounding genuinely impressed. "I haven't gotten a piggyback ride in years. How are you doing this?"

Midoriya rolled his eyes. "I've been bodybuilding for-"

"Haha!" Shinsou said using mind control, like a petty bastard. "Now put me down and lay on the floor."

Midoriya, not having a choice in the matter followed the order and when he was on the floor on his back, Shinsou pointedly draped himself over Midoriya's stomach like a very heavy cat. He politely broke his hold and gave Midoriya an entirely too smug look.

"Really?" Midoriya said dryly. "This was your plan? Sit me into submission?"

"Yep," Shinsou said. It was nice that they had gotten to the point in their friendship that he could be this playful, but god was his friend an incorrigible dork. "I think I'm gonna take a nap."

"I hate you," Midoriya said flatly.

"You love me."

Aoyama exited the cafeteria. Saw them. Smirked. Threw a handful of glitter at them. Took a picture. And left.

The smug look had not left Shinsou's face.

“I *hate* you.” Midoriya said with more emphasis. “You know I can pick you up.”

“You wouldn’t interrupt my nap,” Shinsou said knowingly.

“You’re not even asleep.”

“I never sleep. That’s why I really need this nap.”

Midoriya huffed and getting his feet under him he shifted and lifted Shinsou up bridal style. “You done?”

“Holy cow!” Shinsou gasped, sarcastically. “Is this what gay panic is? I mean I’m pretty sure I wouldn’t know sexual attraction if it beat me with a stick but I am definitely feeling the romance right now. You’ve literally swept me off my feet. What’s next a fancy dinner? You gonna slay a dragon or something?”

“Shut up,” Midoriya couldn’t help but snort.

“If you take your shirt off, with all this glitter we could probably pass for the cover of a romance novel. Call Aoyama back, he’d know.”

“I’m gonna drop you,” Midoriya warned.

“That would interrupt my nap.”

Midoriya dropped him but between his own shortness and Shinsou’s giraffe legs Shinsou didn’t have far to fall.

“I lost him.” Midoriya muttered doubting he’d be able to find Kacchan until class. Shinsou gave him a satisfied smirk and Midoriya glared at him reproachfully. “What, are you guys tag teaming now? Last I checked I could talk to whoever I wanted.”

Shinsou got up and brushed glitter and dust off his pants. “You can. I’m pretty sure we can also run interference too. As far as I’m concerned. I just wanted to hang out with you and you got distracted from what you were doing. Right?”

Midoriya gave him a look and Shinsou’s smirk dropped and he turned more serious. “Did you ever plan on telling me Bakugou was one of the assholes who bullied you?”

Midoriya shrunk under the gaze, slightly. “Wasn’t it kind of obvious?”

Shinsou tsked. “It was obvious that he was an asshole to everyone. It was obvious that his panties were particularly twisted when it came to you. It was not obvious that he’d been harassing you for so long that he’s actually directly fed into your self-loathing.”

Midoriya winced. “What exactly did the others tell you?”

“Enough to make me want to order Bakugou to walk off a bridge. But I’m a better person than him, so he’s safe...” Shinsou shrugged, saying the death threat with little vocal affect. “For now.”

Midoriya shrugged. “I don’t know why everyone’s making such a big deal about it. I mean yeah it got kinda bad sometimes, but these things just happen...”

Shinsou was looking at him like he was an idiot.

“Midoriya,” Shinsou said meeting his eyes, head on. “You can’t lie to me. Not about this. I *know* what it’s like, remember?”

Midoriya flinched and suddenly couldn't meet his taller friends eyes.

After what felt a long moment of Shinsou glaring at him, his friend sighed and rubbed his forehead. "Look," he said too sharply. "I can't judge you. God knows I get it but…" Shinsou gestured vaguely. "This is messed up. We both know it. So I don't get why you're trying to lie about it."

"I'm not-"

"Yes. you are." Shinsou said leaving no room for argument. "If not to me, than at least to yourself. And as someone who's actually managed to earn my respect," Shinsou crossed his arms over his chest. "You should be better than that."

Midoriya blinked the sudden tears from his eyes. He felt terribly put on the spot. It gave him a warm feeling to know that shinsou respected him, but he didn't know how to respond. "It's not that I- er… it's just…" he tried.

Shinsou's eyes filled with sympathy. "You're not used to people offering help."

Midoriya shrugged. No in a good way anyway. Shinsou snorted.

"Me either," he said. "But then a stubborn green haired masochist decided to have simultaneous panic attacks with me. And also he punched me in the face."

Midoriya burst into a flustered, defensive speech, because the punch was at the sports festival and Shinsou definitely hit him back. But Shinsou just flicked him in the forehead. "Take the help you can get. Even if it's pity, things might turn out better than you expect."

Midoriya offered a half smile. "I know… I've been trying. But I still wanna help."

Shinsou rolled his eyes. “Of course you do,” he said with a smile. He reached out and ruffled Midoriya’s hair.

“That’s just who you are.”

Midoriya’s next attempt was foiled by Kouda filling his room with rabbits. They were really well behaved and Midoriya couldn’t be particularly angry because they were so adorable. It couldn’t even be an actual problem. But they made Mighty Mouse jealous and Midoriya was sorta annoyed by the fact that this time he wasn’t even trying to talk to Kacchan. He was going after Kirishima. If he was going to mend their friendship he needed to speak to both of them after all.

Ah well, who cares? Rabbits!

Another attempt was stupidly foiled by Shouji picking him up by the back of his collar like he was scruffing a cat. Midoriya hung from his shirt, toes dangling inches from the ground because Shouji was that much taller than him. He crossed his arms across his chest and pouted.

“Is this really necessary?”

“Apparently,” Shouji said matter-of-factly.

Jirou snapped a picture of them.

Midoriya was starting to get annoyed. The class wouldn’t leave him by himself for even a few minutes. Kaminari even insisted on a sleepover in Midoriya’s room. It was getting ridiculous.

“Et tu, Iida? Et tu?” Midoriya said glaring up at his tall friend. Midoriya had been in an awkward place with his friend after the whole truth serum thing. Iida had apologized awkwardly but Midoriya had kinda called him out. Iida had said he was getting better at managing his anger, but the moment something went wrong again he was throwing punches. Honestly, Midoriya was kind of disappointed in him.

Iida had said he understood.

Now they were standing awkwardly in the kitchen on cooking duty. Midoriya had originally been paired with Kacchan to cook but Iida had volunteered to take over and Kacchan had willing swapped out.

Iida let out a long sigh. “Midoriya, I’ve already said I’m sorry, I understand that my actions were rash and that I should have listened when you told me to stop. What more do you-”

“You could apologize to him,” Midoriya said quietly. He started peeling carrots wondering if they should make some kind of stir fry or stew. He knew he’d have to take the lead on the cooking because Iida didn’t know what he was doing. Normally when he was paired with Kacchan to cook, Kacchan would either make him do menial tasks or kick him out of the kitchen. Midoriya rarely got to choose what was made.

Iida went silent and Midoriya handed him some celery to chop up. After checking the fridge, Midoriya settled on a salmon based dish and went about preparing the fish, probably bought earlier in the day, by Kacchan for this very meal. Midoriya was at very least efficient at this; his mom had been teaching him how to cook for as long as he could remember.

“What if I don’t want to apologize to him, Midoriya?” Iida said softly. He kept his eyes trained on the work he was doing. “What if I don’t think he deserves an apology?”

Midoriya sighed tiredly. All the tension floating around the class since his outburst was starting to get to him. “Why doesn’t he deserve an apology, Iida?” he asked reasonably.

Iida put the knife down with a clatter and smacked the counter top. “Because he hurt you. You’re my friend and he hurt you and I’m sorry but I’m not going to stop being upset about

that just because you told me not to be."

Midoriya put his knife down too. "I can take care of myself, Iida, I have been for a while."

Iida huffed looking beyond frustrated. "That's the thing Midoriya! This! The way you run yourself ragged. It's not normal. And however much I admire your heroic drive and you determination and just… just how independent you are, as your friend, as someone who cares about you, I cannot abide the way you treat yourself."

Midoriya squinted at him and Iida sighed again clenching his fists at his side.

"It upsets me that you hate yourself," he said honestly. "It upsets me that you couldn't come to me and Uraraka about this. It upsets me that you keep hurting yourself and letting yourself get hurt and it upsets me that *he* is one of the people hurting you."

"It's in the past, Iida," Midoriya said frustrated. Why didn't anyone get it? Why wasn't anyone else giving Kacchan a chance?

"No." Iida said firmly. "No, it isn't."

Midoriya clenched his fists and bit his lip trying not to get angry back. It wasn't working

"Midoriya," Iida said staring him down. "He could have killed you our first heroics class. He could have killed you countless other times. He's sent you to the infirmary more than any villain has."

"I've sent me to the infirmary more than any villain has," Midoriya said acidicly. "And I don't see why it's any of your business. I said I have a handle on it. So I have a handle on it. And in case you haven't noticed, Kacchan hasn't hurt me properly for a couple of months."

“A couple of *months* ?” Iida said voice rising. “Do you even hear yourself? He shouldn’t be hurting you at all!”

“I’m fine!”

“No, you aren’t! If you were, you’d understand why this is all so frustrating to me!”

“Oh, yeah, to *you* ,” Midoriya spat. “This is all about you, isn’t it? This problem isn’t about me and Kacchan, it’s about you not knowing how to deal with your guilt or the fact that the world isn’t as neat and clean and *fair* as your family always told you it is!”

“THE PROBLEM IS THAT I’M SCARED FOR YOU!” Iida shouted back, tears beading at the corner of his eyes. “THE PROBLEM IS THAT I CARE ABOUT YOU AND I WORRY ABOUT YOU AND I WANT TO PROTECT YOU BUT YOU DON’T!”

Midoriya leaned back as Iida tears began to overflow. Midoriya was eerily reminded of the times he’s seen his mother cry like this. Guilt began to twist Midoriya’s gut and for the first time he noticed that they weren’t alone. A huddle of their classmates gathered in the living room and doorway staring at them in shock.

“Mom and dad are fighting again,” Kaminari whispered, earning himself a smack from Tsuyu’s tongue.

“Iida,” Midoriya started.

Iida sniffed and wiped his face with a handkerchief from his pocket. “Don’t. Midoriya, you’re one of my best friends and if you can’t understand that the reasons that I’m upset… I don’t think our friendship should continue.”

Midoriya burst into tears.

The thought was utterly terrifying. After letting Iida get so close… after everything they'd been through! To have Iida to cut him off. Just the thought of not having Iida in his life, as his friend. It felt like he was being stabbed in the heart. The fear was overwhelming.

Unbeknownst to him some of his classmates were angrily calling 'nice going, Iida' and the tears were enough to have Iida backpedaling so fast he might leave skids marks on the kitchen tile.

That moment of panic was enough to send Midoriya into a full on anxiety attack and it was Iida of course who ended up taking him away and calming him down and promising, over and over again that they were fine, that he was here, that they were still friends, that he wasn't going anywhere. He was sorry and he promised that he wasn't going anywhere.

It was a rough hour and by the end of it, Midoriya was pretty sure he and Iida were both exhausted. Someone else had ended up making diner and honestly Midoriya felt too nauseous to eat anyway. They had gone off to Midoriya's room, where it was quiet and private and dark. Midoriya's lungs still burned.

"I'm sorry," Midoriya said, finally somewhat calm. He'd been saying it an awful lot in the last hour but that didn't stop him from meaning.

"Me too," Iida said looking extremely tired. He'd been crying too for most of it.

"I know why your upset. I-I understand… I just…" Midoriya couldn't find the words and Iida let out a long sigh.

"When my brother got injured, one of the reasons I was so frustrated and angry was because I felt helpless. I hate feeling helpless. I… if I can do something I at least know I'm making something better… but if I can't do anything-"

"It feels like you're drowning," Midoriya finished. He'd felt like he was drowning for years. For as long as he could remember up until he met All Might.

“Yes,” Iida nodded. “I know I shouldn’t have punched Bakugou. I know I shouldn’t have let my anger get the best of me, but…” Iida shook his head. “I… I think I was scared. Heh- I still am scared. The idea of losing you, of having lost the chance to know you because of something Bakugou said…”

“I’m sorry…” Midoriya said again, understanding the fear Iida felt completely.

Iida snorted. “I think you can stop apologizing now. If it makes a difference, I’m sorry too. I shouldn’t have acted the way I did. To even threaten something like…”

Iida trailed off a look of deep sadness and regret coming into his eyes. Scooching forward Midoriya jostled him his shoulder.

“Friends?”

Iida looked at him with wide and vulnerable eyes.

“Friends.” he confirmed.

“Hey, Deku, can we talk?” Uraraka said the next day. He still felt kind of sick and gross from yesterday’s anxiety attack but he wasn’t about to deny his best friends, especially when she’d been one of the few people acting normal. Occasionally he’d catch her shooting dirty looks at Kacchan but that was actual something she already did. Uraraka seemed to glare at Kacchan whenever he did something obnoxious or mean. That’s one of the things that made her such a refreshing people to be around.

“Sure, wanna go get something to drink?”

Uraraka smiled, “Sure, that sounds great!”

And they headed towards one of the floors vending machines in comfortable silence. When they arrived Midoriya considered whether or not he should get a protein shake or a plain milk while Uraraka hummed considering her what she was going to say.

“Deku,” she said finally. “About what happened yesterday with Iida…”

Midoriya visually drooped. Did she really have to bring it up so soon?

“I just wanted to say, that the feeling isn’t mutual.”

...what?

“I’m not going to underestimate you for this whole thing, just because everyone else is. As your friend I am mad on your behalf, but also as your friend I know you’re strong enough to push forward and move past anything Bakugou has said to you.”

Her eyes sparkled. “What I’m saying is, I’m not scared for you. I believe in you and you better not make me wrong, okay?”

Midoriya stared at his friend his beautiful perfect fantastic friend.

“Okay,” he said smiling brightly for the the first time in what's felt like awhile “I promise.”

And they fist bumped.

He found Shouto behind the school sitting on the ground and staring into space. Midoriya had decided to take a break from his ongoing battle to talk to Kacchan and Kirishima (Kirishima was officially avoiding him too) to figure out what Shouto was up to.

His friend's been eerily quiet and closed off since the TS incident. Midoriya's been trying to figure it out but when ever Midoriya asked directly, there had been too many people around (because they wouldn't leave him alone) so Shouto would either slip away of give monosyllabic answers that didn't clarify anything. Shouto only ever *really* talked when they were alone together.

"You okay, buddy?" Midoriya asked his zoning out friend. It took a few more prods to get todoroki out of his head space and even then he still a blank mask. He glanced at Midoriya and then quickly away.

"I didn't realize," Shouto said softly, staring instead at his own hand.

"What?" Midoriya said, feeling unsure. He'd gotten pretty good at reading Shouto but it's been a while since the boy's been so withdrawn. All Midoriya was getting off him was coldness.

"Bakugou," he said and slowly lifted his intense gaze to look at Midoriya, "He's your Endeavor, isn't he?"

Midoriya opened his mouth to deny but Shouto's eyes were impossible to meet, so he ended up ducking his head and muttering, "It never got that bad."

Shouto narrowed his eyes. "Izuku, my father has never told me to kill myself."

Midoriya tilted his head and gave him a skeptical look. "Only because he wouldn't get what he wanted if you were dead."

"Exactly," Shouto said in a way that says he thinks he made his point even though he hadn't really.

They were silent for a long time, Midoriya getting progressively more anxious and fidgety. What exactly did Shouto want him to say? Finally he peeked up at Shouto's face and saw an

expression that was more conflicted than he was expecting. It was his, ‘I don’t know this social cue’ expression.

“Soooooo,” Midoriya offered, trying to help him.

Abruptly, Shouto punched him in the face.

“Ow! Shouto! What the heck!?” Midoriya said holding his cheek and stumbling back.

An expression of guilt briefly flashed over Shouto's face but it was immediately was followed by another attack. Midoriya dodged this time and quickly dodged again as Shouto followed with another strike. Suddenly, Midoriya found himself in an impromptu sparing max behind the school. Why did this keep happening to him?

“Why are we fighting!?” Midoriya yelped after a near miss. At least they weren’t using quirks.

Shouto's expression remained blank. “I’m trying to help.”

“By beating me up?” Midoriya gasped trying to to an ankle sweep. Shouto easily dodged back.

“It’s your power,” Shouto said, seriously.

“What?” Midoriya said freezing and failing to dodge the fist coming right towards his eye. Midoriya was momentarily distracted by pain and being temporarily blind in that eye. He caught Shouto’s small wince of sympathy.

“It’s your power,” he said again. It took a long moment for Midoriya to get it.

“You’re beating me up so that I have some sorta realization about Kacchan?” Midoriya said looking at him with exasperation.

Shouto paused in a defensive position. “... is it working?”

“Shouto! This is not how you talk about feelings!” Midoriya feeling like he was definitely not the one who deserved a black eye.

“It’s how *we* talk about our feelings,” he said in his flat voice but he looked unsure.

Huffing, Midoriya placed a hand over his aching eye and ordered Shouto to give him a piece of ice. After a long awkward moment, Shouto gave it to him and had the good form to at very least look sheepish.

“Just tell me what you want me to know. With words.” Midoriya said waving his free hand in Shouto's general direction.

“Um…” Shouto looked as though he didn’t know what exactly he wanted to say. “I’m not good at this feeling stuff.”

“I noticed,” Midoriya could help but state dryly.

Shouto huffed and crossed his arms over his chest. “The last two times I talked about feelings it was during a fight. It made sense, okay.”

“Oh, sweety,” Midoriya said feeling genuinely sympathetic. Admittedly Midoriya had had quite a few emotional talks while fighting. Mostly with Kacchan, but there was definitely something cathartic about shouting about your feelings while trying to punch each other in the face. Midoriya couldn’t really blame Shouto for assuming that’s how it worked.

Shouto sighed and ran a hand down his face. “I thought… well I thought I'd figured out what i wanted to say while we were fighting.”

“You don’t even know what you want to say?” Midoriya asked, looking at his helpless friend.

Shouto gave him a blank look and Midoriya sighed. “Okay, lay what you’re thinking out for me. Maybe I can help you figure this out.”

“I’m the one who’s supposed to be helping you,” Shouto said almost petulantly.

“You’ll be helping me me by letting me help you,” Midoriya said easily. After a brief stare down Shouto's shoulders slumped slightly.

He ended up silently sitting back down in the dirt. Midoriya followed him, admittedly a bit woozy from the punch. “I’m angry that you didn’t tell me. I told you about Endeavor but you didn’t tell me about Bakugou. Even though it makes us more alike than I thought.”

Midoriya tilted his head. “Kacchan is no Endeavor.”

Shouto mirrored the motions. “You have burns on your shoulders and arms. I’ve noticed them before. They’re little star marks like the sparks Bakugou’s hands sometimes let off.”

Midoriya winced. He’d had those scars for as long as he could remember. They’d mostly faded into his skin. People didn’t really mention or notice them given his considerably bigger and worse scars.

“I have scars like those, too,” Shouto said blunt as ever. “Not sparks but ones shapes like fingerprints or hands. From when my dad would grab me to silently warn me not to be disobedient. They were never bad enough to worry anyone, easily explained away by training. But they’re there.”

Shouto went silent as if expecting Midoriya to deny where he'd gotten his own scars. When Midoriya didn't reply he looked slightly pleased.

"I've mentally compared Bakugou to Endeavor before." he said flatly. "He's annoying and loud and always pissing himself when he isn't number one or the center of attention. It makes sense that they'd be alike in this way too."

"...maybe." Midoriya couldn't actually deny the similarities. It was actually kind of creepy how similar the two were. Kacchan was more like Endeavor than Shouto was. Midoriya didn't like making the comparison but Shouto wasn't someone he wanted to lie to and admittedly all his friends had been wearing him down. He was just so used to people defending Kacchan that he kind of gotten used to it to. It seemed strange that no one was standing up for him right now. That no one was yelling at Midoriya. That people actually thought Kacchan was in the wrong for a change.

Shouto hummed in response making Midoriya realize he was speaking out loud. "It used to be similar for me, you know. Before my mom snapped and even for a while after. Everyone was always telling me how good and brave my dad was, of how I should be proud of him. Meanwhile at home he was a monster. Sometimes it made me doubt myself. Doubt my own thoughts and sanity."

Midoriya looked down. "Yikes," he said not wanting to admit he knew the exact feeling.

Shouto nodded. "My brother and sister helped with that. They reassured me that I wasn't crazy, that what he was doing was wrong. But I still felt it. You've felt it, too. But we're not the crazy ones."

Midoriya was sorely tempted to argue that one. People constantly called him crazy, whether it be for his recklessness or his anxiety and as someone attending therapy, there wasn't much room to argue anymore.

"Izuku," Shouto said getting his attention. Shouto opened his mouth, held that position for a few seconds and then forced the words past his lips. "I'm not good at this kind of thing, but you can always talk to me. We might come from different worlds but I think I understand you better than I thought."

Naturally, Midoriya burst into tears and hugged him. He had to explain that they were grateful tears but Shouto was thankfully willing to ignore what a mess he was.

Midoriya had great friends.

"Okay I'm ready for you," Aizawa said looking like he hates life. They were sitting in his office Friday evening and Midoriya was supposed to tell him about the truth serum incident. He'd put it off as long as he could but Aizawa wasn't letting him anymore. "Lay it on me. And when I say it, I mean all of it. Don't sugar coat things or try to protect anyone, Midoriya. I need the truth."

Midoriya stared at his red sneakers shyly. "Do you just want the day the fight happened or…"

"Everything Midoriya. All the bullying you've gone through. Everything Bakugou has done to you before and after you two started at U.A. We've already established that some laws have been broken if not just by Bakugou than by your school district. I need a clear picture to correctly proceed whether it be legal action or punishment. I want to understand everything that happened. Do you hear me, Midoriya?"

Midoriya scuffed his shoe against the floor. "...do I have to?" he murmured. "... it's already over, it's not like you can do anything…"

"Midoriya," Aizawa said voice edge slightly with anger. "Look at me." biting his lip Midoriya glanced up. "Do I look like I'm going to do nothing?"

His eyes had that combination spite-determination look that Midoriya sometimes got when he was really tired. The kinda look Midoriya saw when he looked in the mirror two months into hell training when the only thing getting him out of bed was acidic anger and the desire to prove himself. Midoriya was smart enough to know he wasn't going to win this argument.

"Well…" Midoriya said and he closed his eyes in hopes that it would help him manage his anxiety. The closest he'd come to truly having this talk was a few conversations with All

Might, and he refused to go as dark as the full truth with him because… well… he didn't want All Might to think he was weak.

But he remembered all the love and support his friends have been offering him. The surprising amount of understanding and worry, that went deeper than just pity. The words that sounded like promises. The distractions and the brief moments of fun… the embarrassing photos. It… it all made him feel like he had somewhere to fall. That even if Aizawa tore him down and expelled him for some reason, he'd still have his friends. He wouldn't be alone.

So he closed his eyes and remembered.

And

He

Spoke…

The first time he realized he was different was when he was four. When he got that damn diagnosis and he was told he wasn't like other children. That was when it started.

That wasn't when the bullying started. No… Izuku was diagnosed not long after his birthday in early summer. So he had a few months to grow accustomed to the new word that would define him for supposedly the rest of his life. Sure the neighbors whispered, sure his mom would sometimes cry at night, and sure his dad had left for good.

But the first time he was really bullied was on the first day of kindergarten when they went around in a circle and said their quirks and Midoriya couldn't say anything. So the teacher said "Oh, Izuku's quirkless."

Like he was an afterthought.

That was when the denial started to wear off. That was when it started to really sink in that he was actually different. One day he was just Midoriya the next he was that quirkless kid. He was Deku. He was worthless. He was nothing.

It was kinda ridiculous really. Twenty percent of the population was quirkless. Sure most of that population was the older generations, sure there weren't any quirkless kids other than him at his school or in his neighborhood, but he was far from the only quirkless person in the world. Quirklessness came before quirks. They've managed as fine as anyone else, so it was stupid to say that he wasn't anything at all. He was as human as everyone else.

It's just no one else seemed to think that way. His mom alone was the only one who seemed to think he was worth anything. For years… only her.

The bullying started out stupid. They'd call him names, some worse than Deku, others just stupid things like fart hair or whatever. Midoriya was honestly glad most of those names were left on the playground.

Sometimes kids would steal things like his pens and his notebooks and erasers. Midoriya remembers this one time he got a really cool All Might eraser from a gotchupon machine and he was so happy that he actually tried to show it off to the other kids. Of course Kacchan got mad and stole it because it was 'too cool for a quirkless Deku'. Midoriya stopped bringing personal items like that to school after that. He'd lost a few of his action figures to thieving hands too. He stuck to his notebooks and books after that. He was probably six then.

The funny thing was, he told his teachers and even his mom at one point, and everyone just agreed that he was really clumsy and that he needed to stop losing things. His mom brought it up to the teachers. But, nope, he was just a clumsy useless Deku. Tomi saw him drop his eraser out the window, that mechanical pencil belonged to Oshiro not him. Deku's so stupid, he can't even remember where he's left his favorite toy.

It wasn't a big deal.

Midoriya got a lot clumsier after he started school actually. He'd trip in the hallway, he'd fall on the stairs. He ran into the lockers. He fell out of that tree. He fell on the playground. Isn't

he stupid. No one could prove another kid pushed him or punched him and held him down and laughed. It was all clumsiness. He'd startled that kid who'd used their quirk on him. It was just an accident. It was all just accidents. He couldn't prove that they weren't and the other kids were watching. They saw him trip. They saw that it was an accident. No one had a reason to believe him and doubt the other kids. He was outnumbered. He was just… he was lying to get attention.

He was just being a crybaby.

The annoying part was that the kids weren't even good liars. It was obvious what was happening to him but the teachers just went with the crowd. Midoriya supposed it was easier. Why punish an entire class, an entire school when the only person who'd gotten hurt was some useless quirkless kid. Midoriya wasn't going to last in the real world anyway. It was easier to just let it go.

Not everyone was that bad. A few kids stood up for him… but they didn't last long when the bullying was turned on them. He couldn't blame them, that one moment of kindness was enough for him. He'd rescued a few other bullied kids too, they were usually sorta nice to him too. They couldn't be caught though or they'd catch Deku germs. Still it was enough for him. Brief smiles, brief moments of bravery, brief moments of kindness were enough to light up Midoriya's small world.

It got pretty lonely. But he got used to it. He made online friends. He helped people. He smiled.

It was fine.

As they got older things got slightly more violent. People learned to use their quirks better, therefore they learned to hurt him better. They got more subtle, they got better at lying. Midoriya guesses there's a reason why he has a high pain tolerance. He actually read about ways to deal with it. It's proven unbelievably useful. He also good at dodging, and hiding, medicine, lying… he'd learn the hard way that talking about things only got him hurt. It only made his mom cry. So he got strong enough to deal with it.

Midoriya needed to be strong enough because if he couldn't deal with a couple of bullies, how could he possibly be strong enough to face down real villains?

…

...it didn’t make him feel brave or heroic or anything… but it was better than the alternative…

Midoriya wasn’t stupid. He’s known since he was four that the world wasn’t fair. He wasn’t naive. The alternatives were losing battles to begin with. He was one quirkless kid and a single mother against the world. Could things have been better? Of course. But they could have been a hell of a lot worse and if he’d broken the delicate balance he and the bullies had built. If he lowered his mask or let an adult try to help than he knows things would have gotten worse. That’s just how it worked.

Everyone was either too mean or too apathetic to put the effort that was needed to change things. They’d give it a bandage solution, like doing an anti-bullying speech or whatever and a week later the bullying would come twice as strong. It was pointless.

His mom might have done more but Midoriya honestly didn’t want to put that stress on her. She was already working her ass of just to support them. She was already doting and kind enough and loving enough that he couldn’t ask more of her, especially when he knew how much it all hurt her.

Kacchan he was different. Yeah he bullied Midoriya like everyone else, often times he was the leader… but he was different. For all his anger and explosions and cruelty, he was one of the few people who acted like he actually saw Midoriya.

They were childhood friends at first. But then Kacchan developed a super powerful quirk and Midoriya developed nothing and it was like he couldn't understand why Midoriya was weaker than him at first. Like he was waiting for Midoriya to catch up and when he didn’t, when he couldn’t, he got angry and lashed out. There was more to it than that of course. Midoriya can’t even parse the depths of why Kacchan hates him so much. But it… it felt like Kacchan expected more out of him. Like Kacchan was disappointed in him.

Midoriya was trying, god knows he was trying but the distance just kept getting further and further between them and all the sudden Midoriya wasn’t a friend, he was a pebble on the

side of the road. A pebble next to a mountain.

The day Kacchan told him to kill himself was the day his third year middle school teacher told the class that he was applying to UA despite being quirkless. Heh- they kinda put Midoriya on the spot. Midoriya thinks that must have hurt Kacchan's ego given the difference between them. It was like Midoriya was saying they were on the same level even though they obviously weren't.

Midoriya thinks he was just being childish. Bakugou told a lot of people to die. It wasn't that different from any of his other tantrums. It upset him, but at the time Midoriya was more upset that he destroyed one of his analysis notebook.

Midoriya only seriously considered suicide once and that wasn't Kacchan's fault. And things got better right after and Kacchan has grown a lot in this past year at UA. Even if they aren't quite friends, he's definitely not a villain.

…

Midoriya briefly opened his eyes and yelped when he found Aizawa staring at him with shiny unblinking eyes full of terrifying intensity. He wasn't using his quirk but he might as well have been.

Aizawa blinked and the shook his head as if breaking from a stupor. "You said you seriously considered suicide? Why?"

"Oh…" Midoriya said awkwardly. He wiped at his face, unsurprised to find that he'd been crying again. "Don't worry about that. All Might kinda crushed my dreams but he apologized so it's okay."

Aizawa dropped his head on his desk. He seemed to do that a lot around Midoriya. It was probably a fair reaction.

“Why are you like this?” he said in a weirdly wet voice. “Scratch that you just explained why you’re like this but jesus christ kid… I am not paid enough for this. My eyes hurt and we haven’t even gotten to the thing you’re supposed to be here for.”

He didn’t lift his head.

“Well er… that wasn’t that big of a deal. Kirishima, Sero, Kaminari and Mina ambushed me during lunch to dig into my past i guess. And then Kacchan, Uraraka, Todoroki, and Iida came to stop them. I let slip that Kacchan has told me to kill myself. Iida got made and punched kacchan. Everyone was yelling at each other. I told Iida to stop. Uraraka asked me why i was okay with Kacchan bullying me when i wouldn’t be okay with him bullying anyone else. I let slip..” Midoriya mumbled the next few words to quietly to be heard. “...And then I ran for it.”

Midoriya shrugged. Aizawa lifted his head slightly and it was like seeing two shiny eyes in the shadow of his scarf. “You let what slip?”

“Er…” Midoriya said, hoping that he wouldn’t get stuck on that part. “That I hate myself?”

Aizawa groaned. And didn’t stop. For like a full minute and half he just groaned into his scarf. Midoriya could relate honestly.

“You know,” Aizawa said slowly sitting up his face looked wet for some reason but Midoriya doubted it was for the reason he imagined it was. Aizawa wouldn’t cry because of him. He probably just had dry eye and his tear ducts were overcompensating. “I’ve heard stories like yours out of the mouth of villains.” Midoriya instantly flushed, feeling slightly offended. Aizawa wasn’t finished. “I’ve heard stupider reasons for becoming a villain. So where do you get off hating yourself?”

“What?”

“You are honestly going to sit here and tell me that all the violence and abuse that you’ve overcome in your childhood means nothing because why? Because life's not fair? Because you believe the lies they’ve been telling you? That’s bullshit, Midoriya, and you know it is.

You’ve already proved them wrong just by getting here. So why the hell do you hate yourself? When you’ve overcome things most adults and villains haven’t?”

Midoriya shrunk under the frustrated glare. “I’m only at the starting line,” Midoriya muttered, unintentionally turning Aizawa’s own words against him. Aizawa briefly looked like he wanted to tear his hair up.

Then he slumped in his chair and rubbed his temple. “There are many starting lines in life, Midoriya. You might be at the starting line for heroic studies, not even that, given the year we’ve had. But you’re miles ahead of others in other aspects.”

Midoriya squinted, “I am?”

“Yes,” Aizawa said through gritted teeth, like he was resisting the urge to yell again. “Yes you are. You’re empathetic. Intelligent. obnoxiously mature at times. You've developed far healthier than one would could expect.”

Midoriya blinked back tears. Aizawa rarely complimented anyone, and never when they didn’t deserve it. It made Midoriya feel surprisingly warm.

“Now,” Aizawa said finally getting to the work part. “You’re continuing with your therapy?”

“Yes sir,” Midoriya confirmed. While talking to the school counselor felt awkward. He has found that it makes him feel lighter and he’d even gotten some good advice out of it.

“Keep doing that.” Aizawa said firmly. “The school on your records is definitely the one you attended?”

“Yes, sir?”

Aizawa nodded. “I’ll be contacting your mother and seeing whether she’s inclined to sue your school district. I think there’s enough evidence and grounds to.”

‘You can’t tell my mom,” Midoriya gasped.

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“Midoriya.” Aizawa said flatly. “She has the right to know and I assure you having no answers is far more painful than having the reason you’re in pain be a mystery. I assure you that she is already aware that something’s been wrong through your childhood. She probably has been waiting for you to come to her. The fact that you haven’t must be distressing for her.”

Midoriya’s shoulders slumped and he felt incredible guilty. “Can you at least give me some time to tell her myself?”

Aizawa nodded. “It will take some time to put a case together. I recommend you doing it within that time period, but don’t take too long.”

“Yes sir.”

“Very well,” Aizawa seemed to swallow and rolled his shoulders, posture becoming looser. “Thank you. For sharing all that with me. It was brave and showed a lot of… trust.”

Midoriya tilted his head. “Of course I trust you, Aizawa,” Midoriya said genuinely. “You’re always looking out for us.”

Midoriya must have been imagining that his teachers eyes looked shiny again.

“Send Bakugou in on your way out,” Aizawa said gruffly.

Around fifteen minutes later, Midoriya was pretty sure the entire campus heard Kacchan scream the word “QUIRK SUPPRESSANT CUFFS!”

Midoriya tried not to feel too vindictively pleased at that.

When he came back to the dorms he was accosted by party poppers and shouts of “surprise!”

“It’s you’re ‘we’re sorry’ party, Midoriya!” Mina shouted.

Midoriya blinked, honestly feeling emotionally drained but he smiled anyway. “But you guys already apologized.”

“Well, yeah,” Mina said slinging her arm around his shoulder. “But that wasn’t enough of an apology. We’re your friends you know. We shouldn’t have played you like that.” Mina’s smile dropped. “We really are sorry Midoriya. It was wrong of me to pick on you when you were vulnerable like that.”

“Already forgiven,” Midoriya smiled. “But thank you. I appreciate it.”

Mina smiled back gratefully. “Alright sad stuff is out of the way. LET’S GET THIS PARTY STARTED.”

Midoriya grinned. He was pretty sure parties were Mina’s solution to everything. If she had an excuse to throw a party she took it. He admired the energy and work she put into making them fun and including everyone. Party’s weren’t exactly his thing but she always made him feel included. It was nice.

Later in the evening while things were starting to get out of hand and loud (Iida also contributing to the loudness by telling everyone to settle down). Midoriya was sitting to the side, watching fondly as Uraraka pointedly turned people into balloons because Iida told her not to.

“Bet you 5000 yen, she’ll puke within five minutes,” Kirishima said dropping into the seat beside him.

Midoriya smirked, “Ten minutes.’ he said, knowing about the extra training Uraraka was doing.

Kirishima smiled widely back, but it didn’t reach his eyes. “You’re on.”

“You know I’ve been trying to talk to you all week,” Midoriya said, trying to sound playful.

Apparently he failed because Kirishima frowned. “Oh yeah, about that. Sorry again about the whole truth serum thing. It was really unmanly of me. I should have tried harder to stop everyone. It seemed like a joke at the time, but it was really uncool.”

“I told you it was fine,” Midoriya said.

“But it’s not fine. I messed up and i want to make it up to you. Anything you want,” Kirishima said. “I promise.”

“Can you…” Midoriya trailed off, wondering if this was something he should force.

“Anything,” Kirishima insisted.

“Can you consider being friends with Bakugou again?” Midoriya asked guiltily. Kirishima winced “It’s just everyone’s been avoiding him and he’s seemed lonely and I think you’ve been really good for him as a person and-”

“I’m not sure it’s that easy,” Kirishima cut off his ramble. Midoriya glanced away, having predicted this. “It’s not that I don’t want to… part of me misses him. I’ve… well, I’ve always

really admired him. Yeah he could be a bit of a jerk sometimes, but he always went for the things without hesitation or fear. And once you figure out that a lot of the swearing is just bluster he can be really caring in his own weird way."

Midoriya laughed, "Yeah, I know what you mean."

"But I don't think I can admire someone who'd tell someone to kill themselves. I don't want to like him after what he did to you. It's.. it's awful."

Midoriya breathed slowly in and out and then forced himself to admit the truth. "It is. It's always been awful. And i… it hurts a lot sometimes. Sometimes he genuinely terrifies me. I… i can't keep defending him. His behavior… it was abusive."

Kirishima's eyes filled with tears and Midoriya was right with him. God, did Midoriya cry a lot. He'd been trying to learn not to but than feelings just kept happening

"I'm sorry," Kirishima keened hugging him. Midoriya hugged him back. It was not a soft hug, but it was warm. Kirishima ran strangely hot considering he had a rock type quirk. His analyzing side wandered off wanting to check the average body temperature of other people with rock quirks.

"It's fine," the rest of Midoriya said. "I… I'm working on recovering. But… but so is Kacchan. He's been trying to get better too and I don't think he can do it on his own. I think he needs all the help and support he can get. And… and I don't think it'd be healthy for me to be the one giving it to him."

Kirishima was silent for a long time, they hadn't broken the hug yet. "Isn't it wrong to want to be friends with him? After what he did to you. Isn't it wrong to want to help him?"

"No…" Midoriya said softly. "It's never wrong to want to help someone."

"You're so strong, Midoriya," Kirishima cried. "You're so fucking strong."

“Hey, you’re crying?” Mina said sounding distressed a few moments later. “Why are you crying?”

“It’s fine,” Midoriya said letting go of Kirishima and wiping the tears off his face. But he smiled through his tears. Kirishima was right with him.

“Yep,” Kirishima gave a wet laugh, “Midoriya was just proving how manly he-”

Silence abruptly fell when Kacchan entered the dorm. On his wrists were to studded, padded cuffs, recognizable as quirk suppressant cuffs. They weren’t attached to each other so he could move around freely but they were glaringly obvious. Kacchan was glaring at everyone who looked at him.

Uraraka puked, breaking the tension and her human balloons crashed to the floor. Idly, Midoriya acknowledged he won his bet.

Sticking his jaw out and looking entirely too defensive Kacchan approach the spot where Kirishima and Midoriya were sitting. He looked like he’d been crying too. He lightly kicked Midoriya’s shoe. “Hey,” he said gruffly. Midoriya felt all of their classmates eye on them in that moment. Ready to cut in and save him if necessary. “I… I just wanted to say,” Kacchan was acting as though the words were physically painful to drag from his throat. “S-sorry. I was a shitty kid. It was… wrong of me.”

Midoriya eyes overflowed with tears now. He was probably going to be dehydrated but never in his life had he ever expected Kacchan to apologize to him. Never.

“There’s no need to make a big deal about it,” Kacchan said in a defensive tone. He pointed at Midoriya. “I’m still going to be number one hero.”

Midoriya couldn’t help but smile at his childishness. Kirishima rushed forward and hugged his friend before catching him in a headlock and giving him a noogie.

Kacchan was caught off guard enough that he let him.

“Well, I’m not gonna let you get away with that shit again,” Kirishima grinned. “I can’t be best friends with a *total* dick after all.”

Midoriya caught the brief moment of vulnerability in Kacchan’s eyes before he squawked and pushed Kirishima off him. “I’m not a total dick!”

“You kinda are,” Kirishima said and the tension broke and everyone went back to partying some balance returning to the class dynamic. Even if it wasn’t perfect it was enough for Midoriya.

“Hey, Kirishima, you owe me 5000 yen,” Midoriya teased, joining the fun.

It was more than he could ever ask for.

Chapter End Notes

I never expected to write from Midoriya’s perspective for this fic but here we are.
-if I had to choose a character i'm most like it would be Tsuyu or Shinsou. Tsuyu is best girl.
-ace Shinsou for the win!
-I also head cannon that Shinsou doesn’t swear. He’s a pure boi. Iida is very proud
-speaking of Iida where did that fight come from? I was not planning on it. I was just writing and boom it happened.
-would it be mean to point out that Midoriya’s anxiety attack was because Iida threatened to abandon him?
-I feel like Todoroki isn’t shown messing up social cues and emotions enough.
-I wasn’t planning on having this be a crying chapter but then someone challenged me to make Aizawa cry and THIS IS WHAT WE GET!
-*cries* TnT kirishima is just such a good boy

i'm not going to get to into the abuse talk. i do have experience with it but oof, it's complicated. sometimes it's not easy to seperate yourself from your abusers. sometime

the abuse isn't 'bad enough' to be taken seriously. and often times you don't have the support system to get out.

but it's never your fault and even though midoriya is forgiving to a fault, you don't have to be. you're allowed to be as angry and as bitter as you need to be. you're allowed to heal at your own pace.

it's a complicated subject and there are no perfect answers. but i hope you get to safety. i hope you can heal and i'm sorry for what's happened to you. please be safe.

Discord:
https://discord.gg/SEkN8ee
Tumblr:
https://amarelibertius.tumblr.com

Puzzle

Chapter by serenawitchwriter

Chapter Summary

Nedzu gets a surprise

Chapter Notes

by popular demand the Nedzu chapter. HOPE YOU'RE READY TO LEARN!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Despite what some people might think, Nedzu doesn't know everything.

He was intelligent of course, far more intelligent than most. He has an eidetic memory and has found it to be very useful, but that didn't mean he knew everything. That would be ridiculous.

Honestly, Nedzu thought knowing everything would be quite boring, personally. There was no challenge in that, nothing new or exciting to learn, no surprises. He was glad he didn't know *everything* . But there was something to be said about learning as much as one could.

Nedzu's greatest joy in life was puzzles and analysis. He lived for fixing things and arranging things just so. He loved when his plans clicked perfectly into place. He loved understanding things.

He also loved when things went wrong. He loved chaos and mistakes. They taught him new things too, though he couldn't always afford to make mistakes. He was a principal after all, so the pieces he was playing with were children. He could hurt and change these children's futures. His mistakes could end these children's lives.

He thought of it as folding paper airplanes. He had to fold them just right for them to land where they needed. If he didn't they would crash and litter the ground.

He loved watching young heroes leave the school and sink or swim in the world of heroics. Some die too young, some grow into paragons of hope and strength and kindness. He's watched some fall to arrogance or villainy. And with it, he's learned about the world. He's seen the patterns that set each person on each path. He learned what could make the difference between good and bad.

But what Nedzu loved, more than puzzles and patterns and questions, was people. He loved people watching and interacting with people and seeing them grow and change and react. They were all so fascinating! People were the strangest puzzles imaginable, with so many different bits that drive them to react in different ways and the more he watched the more fascinating they became! One moment they might be playing by the patterns most people fall into and the next they'd do something completely unexpected.

It never ceased to amaze him.

Nedzu understood people fairly well, but everyone was different and there was always more to learn!

Midoriya Izuku was a fascinating boy. He took after All Might in the heroics department. He had a hero complex and a heart as large as the number one's. He was also equally prone to guilt at failure. But his smile was never quite as wide as All Might's and he wasn't as good at lying to himself.

He took after Aizawa in as many ways as All Might, really. It was nice to compare and contrast between people. He lacked any sort of ego and he was very good at seeing the heart of any problem, though solutions were a bit more difficult for him. Experience would make the difference there.

It didn't take a genius to see that Midoriya also took after his mother by a great margin. From the brief interaction though, Nedzu had noticed that Midoriya was, in many ways, as much her caretaker as she was his. That isn't to say his mother was anyway lacking, just that single motherhood was difficult. And young Midoriya, as someone so deeply empathetic and prone

to guilt and heroics, would do his best to protect his mother no matter how good his mother is. Nedzu noticed Midoriya's mother, like Midoriya, was prone to anxiety. Young Midoriya may well be attempting to protect his mother from such feelings, though by Nedzu's standards he's doing a rather poor job of it. Between his injuries and his less than stellar ability to lie, the only reason his mother hasn't withdrawn him from the school and decided to home school him for the rest of his life was her own intelligence and faith in him.

In general, Midoriya was something of a sponge when it came to positive adult attention. He generally held a skepticism of the adults around him. Knowing that he grew up quirkless, Nedzu couldn't blame him. Nedzu knew better than to underestimate anyone, especially someone who'd been mistreated by society. He himself had to claw his way past discrimination to get to the position he was at today, it would be very foolish to underestimate anyone else. If he were completely honest, he's a bit disappointed that All Might got to Midoriya before he applied to the school. Nedzu has been itching to enroll a quirkless student, if for no other reason than to mix things up. Judging by the boys intelligence and determination, he would make something of himself whether he ended up in general studies or heroics. A sharp mind, refined by hardship, was an incredibly dangerous thing, especially when given the right opportunities. Nedzu wouldn't deny that Midoriya took the far greater opportunity by choosing All Might's offer, as it would take him beyond anything he could achieve while quirkless. But he'll always wonder how far Midoriya could go without a quirk.

As it stood Midoriya was good at taking in information and criticism and positive feedback. He clearly lacked in that department before he met All Might. Poor Midoriya seems to have put all his hopes and dreams into the man's hands because of it. A tricky thing. All Might, for all his good heart, was not someone anyone should put blind faith in. But as the first father figure Midoriya's had, and as someone Midoriya had pure fanaticism for before their meeting, blind faith seemed to be what he has his heart set on. The more danger and pain he goes through, the more sceptical Midoriya has become, but Nedzu fears that faith is unbreakable. Nedzu could only hope it remains that way for as long as they both live. A symbol in the right hands is a powerful thing. Midoriya could choose a lot worse people to have faith in. A ready example is young Shigaraki Tomura and his blind faith in All for One. That boy is already dead in the water, Nedzu could only hope to mitigate the damage. Though Shigaraki was also someone he'd hesitate to underestimate. The psychologically broken were difficult to predict.

Speaking of which, Midoriya in comparison to Shigaraki was interesting too. Their stories parallel rather neatly. Both hold All Might and the hero society in high regard, both were largely failed by society, both are deceptively intelligent. The main differences are who found them, a fundamental personality trait, and an important gift. Midoriya was found by All Might, he has the steel core of determination, the ability to take opportunities and to make them, and he has the love of his mother. Shigaraki was found by All for One, he generally lacks his own direction and is prone to tantrums, and he never received love. It wasn't any

surprise to Nedzu that they turned out so differently. It'll be fascinating to see them in conflict, when the time comes, though it'll be dangerously destructive. Nedzu could only hope that Shigaraki doesn't leave Midoriya as damaged as All for One left All Might. Nedzu didn't doubt that Midoriya would be the one to win that fight, as they are now or in the future.

Midoriya next to his friends was also quite interesting. In many ways, he stands at the same starting line, but was simultaneously years behind them and years ahead. Midoriya has emotional maturity, that can only be gained through experience and suffering. He knew the world wasn't fair and he knew that hard work was the only way to move forward in life. He wasn't overly invested in people's opinion of him, though he could be pleasantly surprised. He knew what he wanted and every step he takes was striving towards that goal. He, like Nedzu, loved to learn and understand things, so even when he has every excuse to be lazy and young, he was instead focused towards the future.

It's a bit sad that he doesn't enjoy his childhood more while he can. His friends were doing their best to help with that, always eager to be children, but Midoriya grew up too fast for it to be that easy. Frankly, as someone who also had to grow up fast, Nedzu admired Midoriya's drive. His ability to take in the world around him and reshape it towards his goals often stood between that child and death. Nedzu wasn't about to look that gift horse in the mouth, an asset was an asset.

A good example of that ability was Midoriya's relationship with Bakugou Katsuki. They were a tricky combination that Nedzu personally wished were simpler. Aizawa's report of former abuse both by the boy and the school system was concerning, but not all that surprising. Nedzu had long since learned that the system was too broken to completely prevent abuse. He was, after all, one hybrid in a world full of humans. He couldn't only do what he could when the children were in his paws, in his protection.

Bakugou needed to be reshaped, reformed almost completely. But such things were easier said than done, especially when it came to humans. Bakugou needed to learn the right lessons at the tight times or else he would go down the many dark and violent paths he had built for himself. Nedzu would do his best of course, nothing thrilled him more than a challenge, but the hybrid also believed in karma, or at least push coming to shove. It was after all logical to believe that making many enemies would lead to many people trying to harm you. Bakugou had a long road ahead of him if he were going to be the kind of hero UA would be proud of.

Luckily, he had a head start. Midoriya, that fascinating manipulative bean, has been trying to shape him for years. He's been planting ideas, acting as the voice of reason, picking apart

Bakugou's warped thought processes, so that the good was already planted in the blond boys thick skull. Now it was just a matter of nurturing those thought processes and getting them to grow.

Unfortunately much of that effort has come at Midoriya's own expense and Bakugou was planting negative thought processes right back. Between the two of them Nedzu was sure there is a perfect hero and a perfect villain. Midoriya has the stubborn will and unbreakable spirit, but he also has the fear and disillusionment with society. Bakugou had the drive and a lack of hesitation when it came to reaching his goals, but he also lacked hesitation when it came to harming others.

Nedzu and his fellow educators had quite the job loosening the grip those boys' darker sides had on them. But as with all students, he would do his best.

Abuse was a difficult thing to overcome. Nedzu knew this all too well. But he *would* help Midoriya.

In general, Nedzu felt Midoriya was good at motivating people towards their best selves. His friendship, and occasional fights, with Uraraka, Iida, and Todoroki has already shaped them into better people. He's had a positive influence on many of his classmates! Shinsou and Kouda have gained confidence through his friendship. Iida has began addressing his potential anger issues. Uraraka has began chasing the heroic ideal far more earnestly. In this way Nedzu sees Midoriya's similarity to All Might the most, and he's sure Midoriya will become a more prominent public figure. His positive 'heroic' influence was going to spread further and influence so many more to be the best person they could be.

After all, All Might is just one man, who can only stop so many villains. But as a symbol, as the hero who saves people with a smile, he has the power to shape society. Midoriya is already becoming a symbol in his own localized way. He is a leader and a friend to his classmates. It is only a matter of time before he becomes that for the world.

Nedzu is knocked from his thoughts by a timid knock on the door. He knew exactly who it was.

"Come in," he called enthusiastically and in stepped Midoriya, just on time. As usual, he had worked himself into a mild frenzy of stress and was sweating profusely.

“Ah, Midoriya, I’m glad you could make it,” Nedzu smiled. He said that every time Midoriya came in, because it was a genuine fact. Midoriya was the first student in a long time who didn’t run screaming from his office by the second lesson. Nedzu had had other students, of course, many who had intelligence quirks and considerably higher IQ’s than Midoriya, but apparently, if the complaints from the school psychologist were any indication, his lessons were too challenging and stressful for those students. He appreciated that Midoriya was up to the task of returning every other day. He admired that dedication.

“Hello, Nedzu,” he said, using the principal’s name without honorifics, just as Nedzu had insisted. He still wore the timidness he always had when first entering the lesson. Midoriya tended to get worked up and anxious before their lessons, which Nedzu supposed was perfectly natural. He also seemed slightly afraid of him, and Nedzu could easily guess why; Nedzu did have power over the boy’s future after all, and he wouldn’t deny that he could be an intimidating figure. But Nedzu couldn’t help but feel disappointed given the closeness he felt they were developing.

Nedzu gave his best enthusiastic smile. “Now that we have finished learning about environmental analysis, we’ll be moving on to my favorite thing; psychological analysis. You did the reading I gave you, yes?”

“Yes, Nedzu,” Midoriya said nodding urgently.

“Fantastic,” Nedzu smiled warmly. “Do you have any questions?”

This was another thing that Nedzu liked about Midoriya. He rattled off questions easily and openly. The students that Nedzu had had in the past didn't seem to understand that when Nedzu said they could ask questions, he meant that they should. It was beyond foolish to assume that you had all the answers. Sometimes the only way to find information was to ask for it. When he brought questions to the school board, he often found information and answers he would never have considered on his own. Some of the puzzles he gave his personal student could only be solved if the students asked him the right questions but so few did. They let their own egos or the expectations they held themselves to cloud their judgement. That was a failure of their intelligence in itself.

After answering Midoriya's intelligent questions, Nedzu stood up and beckoned Midoriya to do the same. "Now the first thing we're going to focus on is body language. Your own, the body language of others, micro expressions, how to detect when people are lying by their body language, and how to lie with our body language."

"Okay," Midoriya nodded, fidgeting with his hands. Nedzu's eyes keyed in on the motion but he wouldn't say anything until the moment was right.

"Now you, like most people, are probably aware of people's body language on a subconscious level. Human beings are social creatures. They are made to detect faces and expressions on instinct. Emotions are also something you are sensitive to. A change in your fellow humans' expression can indicate any number of things. From fear to anger to attraction, detecting the subtle differences can make the difference in survival, hence why it exists as part of your identity.

"Interestingly, there have been studies showing that human beings' instinctive expressions are consistent throughout the entire human race. A person here will facially express anger the same way as someone in Canada or Nigeria would. This implies that showing emotion is instinctual rather than learned. Language, on the other hand, is something that's learned and is constantly evolving and changing. We'll focus more on that when we have our lesson on language, but I find the difference neat. It seems as though expressions were the universal language first and vocal communication just followed for convenience sake."

Midoriya tilted his head to the side utterly invested in the lesson now that it'd started. "That's why Kouda-kun's animal communication is more reliant on body language, because animals communicate with body language more than sound."

Nedzu nodded, "Too right you are, though don't be deceived. Tonal communication is just as strong of an indicator of emotion than any visual clue one might receive. We'll focus more on it when we get to that lesson though. For now, I think it's time we enter the first test! Midoriya, what emotion are you showing with your body language right now!?"

Midoriya startled and went ramrod straight. "Well- um- I'm probably showing anxiety and nervousness, and tension, right?"

Nedzu's eyes turned more predatory. "And what exactly are you doing to show that in your body language?"

Midoriya relaxed a little as his expression turned thoughtful. "Well, my physical tension would be the most obvious indicator. I'm uh.. Fidgeting with my fingers and I guess I'm uh... stuttering."

"Very good," Nedzu said slightly sharply. "And what were you doing before you started acting anxious?"

Midoriya's face went blank in thought. "...I don't know, Nedzu."

Nedzu smiled in a way that unsettled most. He could never quite smile the way a human could. He had the wrong facial muscles but he always did his best. "And what are you doing now?"

Midoriya blinked out of his thoughts and glanced down at his body as if the answers lied only there.

"Well , confused, I suppose," he said slowly. "I'm definitely biting my lip and my eyebrows are drawn together."

"Yes, indeed," Nedzu nodded energetically. "But not detailed enough. I notice that your first instinct is to say an emotion. What defines an emotion in body language. Don't just say what the emotion is, say how that emotion is conveyed through body parts. Go on."

"Well… I guess my eyes are wide and my arms are floppy but my shoulders are still tense. I keep shifting my weight from foot to foot. Um… I guess I keep moving my hands a lot. I.. I'm not sure what else to say."

Midoriya frowned as if staining to think of something. Nedzu smiled reassuringly "Don't worry, my boy, that was very good for a first try. For one of your next homework

assignments, I want you to start paying attention to your body language from now. The time limit should be at least a month, by then the awareness should be habit enough that you'll always be aware of it. You can record your observations in your notebook if you like but it's important, Midoriya, that you don't try to change the habits you don't like yet. Can you tell me why, Midoriya?"

Midoriya's face took on a considering look. "...because awareness fundamentally changes the outcome of an experiment?"

"Close," Nedzu smiled. "Try again."

Midoriya thought for longer this time. Then a thought sparked behind his eyes. "Because if i change my body language, it's not about me learning what I do on instinct, it's about what I think my body language should be. I won't learn my habits, I'll learn something else."

"Closer but still not quite," Nedzu said walking around his desk and hopping up on the coffee table. "This is about lying, Midoriya. If you want to lie convincingly you'll need to act how you would normally act. And to act how you normally act, you'll need to know how you'll normally act to the tiniest habit. Don't worry, I'll help and send you video footage of yourself so you can observe yourself from an outside perspective. If you start changing your behavior, not only will you defeat the purpose of learning your own behavior, but people will notice. They'll be more observant if they notice you acting different."

Midoriya hummed in interest. "But wouldn't people notice me observing myself as well?"

"If you let them," Nedzu said cleverly. "But if you hide your actions within your normal habits they won't, for instance when you're muttering your observations, write it in something that looks like one of your hero notebooks. No one will notice the difference unless you let them. Think of it as a special challenge. Don't let anyone notice that you're acting different or observing yourself."

Midoriya nodded solemnly. "Wouldn't that be a bit like lying to my friends? I don't like lying…"

“But it’s a valuable skill to have,” Nedzu said plainly. “The moral arguments aside. Studies show that humans lie at least 24 times a day. Little white lies, lying by omission, big fat lies, lying to yourself. They all add up, Midoriya, and there’s no shame in that. Studies show that your brain chemically rewards you when you lie for your own benefit. Because, again moral objections aside, survival and self-betterment can be improved by deception. Take for instance a hunter laying a trap to lure in an animal. Is it fundamentally dishonest? Of course, but it is also makes a hunter more likely to eat that night.”

Judging by the way Midoriya leaned away from him, Nedzu must have been giving him a dangerous look. Nedzu tended to have a rather… personal stake in argument on hunting. His arguments about sentience often fell on deaf ears despite the amount of evidence he provided. Silly little humans, always so arrogant. One days, Nedzu was sure, they’ll be the ones being hunted. But alas, survival first. He was part of this human society, he’d have to act like it.

Nedzu laughed, lightly. “And that’s not to mention the social benefits! Humans are often quite different, easily brought into conflict. Lies and mild deceptions, pleasantries, can ease these tensions. It can prevent you from having to face the darker sides of society, helps you live your day to day in peace.”

“But…” Midoriya said slowly, almost cautiously. “But lying doesn’t make the darker sides go away. It doesn’t fix anything and when the lie comes out, it always ends up backfiring.”

“Not necessarily,” Nedzu said, leaning forward. “Sometimes the lie is publicly agreed upon. Take All Might. He’s told you himself that his smile is his way of lying to himself. And people believe that lie. Because it’s easier to believe than having to live in fear of the violence and villains out there. Most people aren’t hurt by this lie. Most people are even aware that it *is* a lie.

“The world isn’t safe or fair,” Nedzu said almost sadly. “We both know that, Midoriya. But sometimes it’s hard to live in a world without hope. Sometimes lying is the only thing that stands between us and total darkness. Heh, sometimes the lie will eventually be the truth if you hold onto it long enough.”

Midoriya ducked his head and Nedzu knew what he was thinking. Midoriya has told himself the same lie that Nedzu has told himself countless times before. It’s okay. It’s going to get better. The words always felt like a lie in the darkness. They always seemed to take a sacrifice to make real. But they could become real.

They could.

“Other times a well placed lie can buy you time, can buy you safety, can buy you an escape. A good bluff can make the difference between a villain being on the streets and a villain being in prison. Sometimes lying is more of a game of chess or poker, where your cards, your pieces, are the lives of your friends, the lives of citizens, and your own life. Sometimes you have nothing to barter with. Sometimes it’s just you against countless villains or monsters and the only thing keeping you alive is your ability to talk. Lying is a powerful important skill.”

Midoriya opened his mouth, then closed it and looked away. Quietly he whispered. “It makes me feel dirty.”

Nedzu smile gently and patted Midoriya’s knee. “Then I think you should reconsider the reasons you’re lying. I’d say that makes the real difference. Are you protecting yourself, protecting others, helping yourself survive, or,” Nedzu held up a tiny claw, “are you avoiding a problem? Are you lying to yourself? Are you afraid of getting hurt for telling the truth?”

Midoriya definitely wouldn’t meet his eyes now. Nedzu wasn’t surprised.

“Alright!” Nedzu said, ineffectively clapping his paws. It made the tiniest pat. “Philosophical argument aside, whether you lie or not, people are going to lie to you. So we best start teaching you how to recognize that. Midoriya, do you know what micro expressions are?”

“Not really,” Midoriya said frowning, blinking away his other thoughts.

“Fun!” Nedzu said, jumping of the coffee table and grabbing his laptop. “That means we get to play the game!”

“Game?”

Nedzu opened his computer and brought up the game. “Micro expressions, Midoriya, is that brief instinctual expression a person shows before they have time to cover the expression up. It’s the best way to gauge what a person is really thinking, because it’s not something they can cover up. Come watch the videos! Play! play!”

Nedzu watched Midoriya played and noticed his focus. He decided to start talking again because one of the many skills Midoriya needed to improve at was multitasking. When you’re having a conversation with someone, there would be all sorts of distractions after all. You wouldn’t be able to sit in focus.

“Another assignment you’ll have for homework is observing your classmates and taking notes of when they seem to lie. I don’t really care what the lies are about, I just want you to write down your observations. Preferably in the same notebook as your Nedzu notes. I’ll also be sending you a series of videos, both human and animal, where you need to describe what their body language seems to be saying. Take special note of those who are lying.”

Midoriya barely glanced up from the game and muttered softly to himself, “I wonder if the reason he’s asking me to observe my classmates is because there really is a UA traitor and he wants me to take notes of any suspicious behavior. But i really don’t think anyone in 1-a could be a traitor… but maybe that’s why he framed it the way he did… I’m not looking for the traitor. I’m just looking for liars. It’s just more information to work with. It doesn’t necessarily mean the liar is the traitor, it just means there’s a pattern of some people lying more than others. Oh, but how would this work on Hagakure, I can’t exactly read her expression and her visible body language is usually a performance…”

Nedzu smiled. His student was getting more observative. “Midoriya, remind me to teach you how to weaponize your mumbling.”

“Yes, Nedzu,” Midoriya mumbled as he finished the quiz.

Nedzu smiled as he went through the answers, impressed with the results. “Are you sure you haven’t heard of micro expressions before, Midoriya? Your scored far higher than most first timers. Higher than I expected.”

Midoriya shrugged, “After Kacchan it was kinda easy.”

Ah. that was a dark thought. It was common for abuse victims to be keyed into micro expression and the emotions of those around them. It was a means of self defense. The ability to recognize when someone's emotions were going to suddenly change. Let you know when to run or react or backtrack. If Bakugou were more volatile and less valuable, Nedzu decided, he would have expelled the boy himself. Disarming that human bomb was an unforgiving job.

“Then I suppose we can skip ahead a bit,” Nedzu said keeping his enthusiasm. “I’ll add Coffey’s chapter on lying to your reading assignment. Take particular note of physical ticks people have in there body language when they lie. It’ll help you with your other assignments.”

Midoriya nodded. Nedzu smiled fondly and decided Midoriya might be ready for what Nedzu considered one of his most important lessons. He’d be handing Midoriya a very sharp weapon indeed, but Nedzu has decided that he’s ready for it. He’d proven to be of good enough character not to misuse it.

“Manipulation, Midoriya,” Nedzu said talking his seat behind his desk. “Is very different from lying. Can you tell me why?”

Midoriya’s eyebrows drew together and he considered his answer before answering. “Lying is just telling a person something that isn’t the truth. Manipulating is… controlling someone so they do what you want…”

“That’s correct, Midoriya!” Nedzu praised. “Very good. Now before we consider this lesson I want to tell you a story.”

Midoriya settled into his chair, eye’s lighting up with interest. This wasn’t the first story Nedzu has told and Midoriya’s interest was yet another reason Nedzu considered him his best student. Nedzu tended to lose people when he got into subjects he found interesting, stories in particular. Nedzu loved information and how they added up to something of meaning. But other people... didn’t most of the time. He could tell it wasn’t personal. His asides on the history of linguistics, or the anthropology of cheese was plenty interesting to him. But it went over the heads of most people. Midoriya was always interested, which made their conversations just that much more delightful.

“This is a story of two vikings meeting in an ale house. Both have servants. One of the servants is a cupbearer. She brings her master his drinks and brings him food when he requests it. He beats her awfully and is always berating her for her mistakes. The other viking’s servant is an assassin, who desires to kill his master because his master is the one who killed his father. One of them is going to kill their master in the night. So you have a guess who, Midoriya?”

Midoriya frowned thoughtfully. “I want to say the cupbearer…” he said. “But that’s mostly because she’s not the obvious choice and if the assassin has taken on the roll of trusted servant then he probably has a bigger plan… does the viking know his servant is an assassin?”

“You’re not wrong, Midoriya,” Nedzu answered. “And yes, the assassin kills for his master regularly. He also does in fact have a plan, as I will explain. The two vikings had a conversation that foreshadowed their fates, earlier that evening. They were talking about the performance of there servants and how to get them to behave.

“The master of the cupbearer ruled with fear. He functioned under the assumption that if someone was afraid of you, they would never act against you because they know you would cause them pain. They know that you could kill them easily. Their life is in your hand.”

“That’s stupid,” Midoriya’s mutter interrupted. “Hurting people is how you make enemies, not how you earn loyalty.”

Nedzu raised his eyebrows. “Why do you say that?”

Midoriya squeaked. “I said that out loud!?” after Nedzu nodded, he answered. “It’s just- if it were me… well I mean it’s only natural that hurting people would foster resentment and hatred. Sooner or later the anger is going to outweigh the fear and they’ll fight back. It’s simple logic. I mean… I don’t get why he wouldn’t understand that…”

Midoriya had started out frustrated, but slowly trailed off when he couldn’t quite explain his feelings in better words.

“Midoriya,” Nedzu prodded. “Can you list some reasons why the viking wouldn’t understand your point of view.”

Midoriya looked away and after a moment softly said, “...because he’s never been in the position of the servant. Because he’s never been afraid in the same way…”

Nedzu nodded. “Not everyone has had the same experiences or emotions as you, Midoriya. While your empathy is admirable, it is based around your own experience. You have to be careful about judging others because of this. It’s easy to accidentally hurt others when you are ignorant. It is easy to write off other people's suffering when your pain has been different. For instance, you can say you’ve suffered the discrimination of being quirkless but you can’t say you’ve suffered the discrimination of having a mutation quirk. While you know the pain of being judged for something beyond your control, quirklessness isn’t something people notice on sight. Meanwhile someone with a mutation quirk would be judge immediately by their appearance. It’s similar but fundamentally different. Some people have never experienced discrimination at all.”

Nedzu looked at his paws sadly. “I’ve found that hatred is either an act of pain or ignorance. Remember this, Midoriya, you can not hold onto either. Ignorance is a breeding ground for circular causation. You harm someone out of ignorance, they grow to hate you out of pain, they hurt you back, you misunderstand their reasoning and hate them more. Until there is mutual understanding, the cycle doesn’t end until people are dead. Likewise, holding onto pain is toxic to oneself. If you allow it to your own hatred can fester and bleed into every aspect of your life. It can change your belief and how you treat others. It can make you forget what it is to be happy and it what means to be kind, what it means to receive kindness, what it means to be alive and sentient here on planet earth.”

Midoriya’s eyes glistened. “I know, Nedzu.”

And Nedzu didn’t doubt him.

“But back to the story,” Nedzu continued. “The other viking, the one whose servant was an assassin, had a very different idea of how to keep someone's loyalty. See, the assassin was originally a boy whose father the viking killed. The boy tried to kill the viking not long after his father's death - he was a twelve year old child against a grown adult warrior. The child

lost, and the viking could have easily killed him, but instead he made a deal. The boy could live and earn his right to fight the viking again if he came to work for him. In the meantime he can train and improve and become the perfect weapon to kill him. The boy agreed and has been working as an assassin for the viking ever since."

"How did the viking know the boy wouldn't kill him in his sleep?" Midoriya frowned.

"The other viking asked that very question, Midoriya," Nedzu leaned forward. "And the answer was very simple. You see, there are two secrets to manipulation. The first is that you know what a person wants, the second is that you give it to them." Midoriya tilted his head, a question still in his eyes, and Nedzu held up a paw to silence him. "The viking knew exactly what the boy wanted. The boy the assassin wanted to beat the viking in fair and honorable battle. He wanted to return honor to his family name after his father had lost it. He would not betray his father or his own honor by cheating. The viking knew this, and more importantly, he completely intended to keep his end of the bargain. When he swore to the boy that he could kill him it was his complete intention to die by the boys hand."

Nedzu gave him a strange little smile, "And when I say that you have to give the person what they want i mean it. People can read your intentions. They can see through desperate pleas and bluster. It's like a good threat. If I were to tell you that I was going to rip out your intestines and feed them to you, sure it sounds scary and threatening, but the words mean nothing if you don't believe I'm going to follow through on them." Nedzu gave a small slightly terrifying laugh. "And disemboweling someone is a lot of work and highly illegal. While the gore has shock value it's hard to believe I'd follow through on that threat."

Midoriya's face seemed to disagree. Oh poo.

"On the other hand," Nedzu decided to continue. "If I told you I was going to hit you with a shovel, you'd definitely believe I'd with you with a shovel because not only is it an easy task, but if I say it, I absolutely intend to follow through. You get me?"

Midoriya was looking particularly pale and distressed. "You're gonna hit me with a shovel?"

"No, Midoriya," Nedzu waved the fear off. "Only make threats that you can and will follow through on. Only make promises you intend to keep. That's how you manipulate someone."

Midoriya looked genuinely confused. “But I always intend to keep my promises, how is that manipulative?”

“It’s not!” Nedzu said cheerfully. “In this case we’re talking about getting something you want from somebody. How about another example? You’ve been taken prisoner by a villain and you want the guard to work with you to help you escape. He’s not inclined to work with you but if you know what he wants, say money, or his ransomed dog, if you can promise that you’ll get him what he wants and fully intend to keep your promise, then you’re cooking with fire. You don’t have to smash your way out of the situation and break your arm, you can just negotiate.”

“What if I can’t keep my promise? Or don’t have anything to barter with? What if he doesn’t want to make a deal with me or doesn’t believe I can get what he wants? And isn’t he more inclined to trust his boss than me? And wouldn’t he-”

Nedzu laughed, “This isn’t one of our roleplay scenarios, Midoriya,” Midoriya promptly shut his mouth. “But to answer your questions. Sometimes keeping the promise isn’t as important as intending to keep the promise. Don’t lie, but understand your own limitations. And you’d be surprised at what you have to barter with when you have nothing. I would know,” Nedzu laughed again when he saw Midoriya’s eyes shoot to his scar. “Making deals and learning what people want is more about building rapport, a talent i think you already have.” Midoriya looked ready to argue but Nedzu clapped his paws again and swished his tail. “Building rapport involves a lot of empathy and listening skills, it about building trust and I can assure you, Midoriya, you seem very trustworthy.”

Midoriya looked away when he said that. How… strange…

“The point is, manipulation isn’t inherently bad. It’s essentially a ‘you scratch my back i’ll scratch yours’ situation. These moments exist in daily interactions, interactions with lawyers, newscasters, civilians and villains. If you know how to barter and intend to deliver, you can get a lot for a little.”

Midoriya hummed and began to chew the nail on his thumb thinking deeply. This time the mumbling didn’t make it past his lips, but Nedzu could see the thoughts flying in his eyes.

“Would you like to try?” Nedzu asked.

Midoriya startled. “ *What* !?”

“Would you like to try manipulating me?”

Midoriya looked horrified. “What? No! There’s… no way… I couldn’t ever… even if I try… I’m just me… and *you’re*... ”

Nedzu loved how expressive Midoriya’s hands were when he got flustered. “There’s no way of knowing until you try. Surely there is something you want to know about me.”

Midoriya stopped flailing and looked conflicted. A long moment passed, with only Midoriya's brilliant eyes speaking. Until finally, “...how did you get your scar?”

Nedzu chuckled. How predictable? “And?”

Midoriya hummed thoughtfully. “You like information right? Almost as much as I do... and earlier I caught you looking curious? What did you want to know?”

Nedzu smirked but kept his lips sealed. Nedzu could see more gears turning in Midoriya’s eyes. A look of determination overtook them.

“It was when you were talking about trust. I looked away because I don’t think I’m trustworthy… you want to know why. You don’t know do you?”

Nedzu tried not to look too eager. He had no plan of giving up his story so easily. “I admit that I’m curious.”

“Then I’ll tell you. If you tell me your story.”

“I’d hardly call that an equal trade, Midoriya, no deal.”

“Are you sure?” Midoriya said carefully. “I mean I know why I would seem trustworthy… it’s because i have a lot of secrets. Secrets i’m good at keeping. Which is why… um… which is why you would be able to trust me with your secret…”

“You’re implying that you’re untrustworthy though, Midoriya, that means I can’t trust you with my secret,” Nedzu easily poked a hole in his logic.”

Midoriya’s eyebrows drew together. “Well just because *I* think i’m untrustworthy doesn’t mean i *am* untrustworthy to you. I’m trustworthy to a lot of people. I just have my own separate reasons for thinking i’m untrustworthy. Reasons that you don’t know.” Midoriya was falling into a bit of a ramble. “There’s a lot of things that you don’t know actually. You’d be really surprised. I’ve noticed. You only realized the extent of my bullying with Bakugou when it came out last week. You were unable to predict the villain attacks to stop them even though you act like it’s a game of chess… unless you’re drawing them into trap? Are you? Are you luring them into a false sense of security by making them think they’re winning so you can blitz them later when they mess up? But that seems really dangerous…”

“I’m not that much of an evil genius, Midoriya,” Nedzu interrupted patiently. “Not every inevitability can be planned for. The villains having someone with a teleportation quirk is unprecedented and makes tracking their movements incredibly difficult. And i would never risk the lives of my students to create a trap for some villains. Villains are too unpredictable. Death is too permanent. Admittedly the villains have us slightly on the defense, but I assure you, I would give my own life before I’d willingly let one of my students die.”

Midoriya momentarily gave him what Nedzu had nicknamed the ‘fanboy’ look. That excited look of admiration reserved for heroes and people he considered especially brave. There were metaphorical stars in his eyes. It was very cute.

“But that just further proves that you don’t know everything, Nedzu,” Midoriya said, getting back on task. I mean I’m pretty sure I know more about the Todoroki case than you do, and I’m supposedly a bystander in all this.”

“Supposedly?” Nedzu caught, eyes narrowing on Midoriya. He knew Midoriya was a friend of Todoroki and that perhaps Todoroki had confided in him about his abusive father, but to claim to know more about the case than Nedzu was rather arrogant for Midoriya. The only way he way he’d have access to that information was if he was up to something he wasn’t supposed to be.

Midoriya squeaked like his hand was caught in the cookie jar, more or less confirming Nedzu’s suspicions. “I-I j-just really worry about my friend and how he’s doing you know… his safety...”

“If Todoroki has given you information or if you’ve witnessed anything, you should take that information to the police, Midoriya. You’ll be a valuable witness,” Nedzu said sharply.

Midoriya said waving his hands and backtracking, “I am a witness, that’s why I know so much. Don’t worry.”

Midoriya wasn’t practicing his recent lesson in lying. It would take work to learn, Nedzu supposed. “I’m sure you’re aware that witnesses aren’t given imperative information in the case, Midoriya. They’re kept in the dark to prevent bias and interference with evidence. If you’re caught, not only your testimony but the information you dug into would be thrown out.”

Midoriya winced. “ *If* I get caught…”

Nedzu gave an amused snort. “I won’t tell anyone you’ve been up to trouble.”

“Can you at least tell me what you know?” Midoriya asked earnestly. “I don’t want to mess up Shouto’s case. I just want to know that he’s okay.”

“You won’t have to worry too much, Midoriya.” Nedzu said calmingly. “Until the case goes to court, Todoroki is a ward of the school, similar to Eri. He will not be returning to that house anytime soon. Depending on the results of the case, another smaller case will be

opened to decide guardianship. He will likely go to one of his siblings. As for the case itself, well you already know, but it's going well. Endeavor isn't as good at covering his tracks as his lawyers think he is. Some of the information doesn't equal abuse, but with luck we can bring enough civil law cases against him that we can manage to put him away to put him away for a long time. The case is still young, Midoriya, it has a long way to go before it's taken to court and for now your friend is in relative safety. So you don't have to worry about it too much."

Midoriya looked relieved.

"But we've gotten off track," Nedzu said. "You still haven't explained why your secret has the same value as my secret, and the class period is almost over, so your time is ticking."

"I don't need to," Midoriya said.

Nedzu blinked slowly. "What?"

"I don't need to explain the value of a secrets because your secret wasn't what I wanted to know." Midoriya said looking like he was afraid he was going to get in trouble. "What I really wanted to know was about Todoroki's situation. I just figured if you knew that was what I wanted to know you would intentionally not tell me…"

Nedzu stared at his student for a long silent moment. Midoriya looked like he wanted to melt into his chair. Then the principal burst into laughter.

"Very good, Midoriya!" Nedzu practically applauded. The bell marking the end of the period rung and Nedzu couldn't stop smiling. "That technique of misleading is mentioned in your assigned reading. I've got a copy here." Nedzu handed Midoriya a piece of paper with all his homework written on it. "And I'll start emailing you the videos tonight. Good work today, Midoriya. Good work!"

"I… thank you, sir- Nedzu," Midoriya said, taking the sheet and packing up his bag. "I-I'll see you thursday."

And Midoriya practically rushed from the room.

Nedzu remained smiling and he spun his seat leaning back and enjoying the sheer novelty of being surprised. Midoriya had caught him more off guard than expected, but then again, that was probably Nedzu's own fault for underestimating him. How delightful.

He was truly making a monster. A paper plane like no other.

Nedzu couldn't wait to see where he'd land.

Chapter End Notes

it's done! I've been writing this since the first chapter. Fun fact: saying writing a Nedzu chapter is easy. actually writing a Nedzu chapter is hard
-Most of the lesson is based on actual psychology and advice on reading people. I did actual research
-I know that Kouda's been canonically established to use his powers through verbal communication but here, I've established him as being completely mute so he's staying that way, even if it fundamentally changes his quirk.
-if you're wondering why that manipulation story sounds familiar it's because I'm referencing the manga Vinland Saga by Makato Yukimura. It was a moment that really stuck with me and the manga in general is fantastic and beautiful. Go read it.
-the stuff about threats was something I learned on my own. Does that sound bad?
-the 'asides on linguistics and the anthropology of cheese' are both real life examples of me losing people's interest mid conversation

Discord:
https://discord.gg/SEkN8ee
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https://amarelibertius.tumblr.com

Teenage Rebellion

Chapter by serenawitchwriter

Chapter Summary

Punks not dead, it’s just hiding.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

If there was one thing Jirou loved it was music. All things considered she figured that was lucky because like it or not she was constantly assaulted by music. Whether it be a distant radio or through someone else’s headphones she could always hear it.

The power was sometimes inconvenient. For instance she had heard Eye of the Tiger, a positively ancient motivational song hailed as a classic by historians, *so many fucking times* . Apparently it was either the school song or Principal Nedzu just really liked it but. It. Was. Always. Playing.

The song-on-repeat curse also applied to basically any top twenty song for the last decade. Sometimes she’d think she’d finally escape a song and all the sudden it was just there at the edge of her hearing, enough of an earworm to get stuck in her head.

The struggle was real, but it also meant that she knew a lot about music. By nature, she was exposed to more music than anyone else. So she noticed patterns in the music and she learned a lot about how music was written and what sounded good. She started learning how to play instruments young. It was something she cared about.

She wasn’t stuck up enough to call people out on their shitty music tastes. She figured it was like one’s taste for food, everyone's tongue was different right? Same for ears. She just had a more refined palate.

It was hard, though, especially when they moved into the dorms and she started getting exposed to her classmates taste in music on a regular basis. Music reflected on people's personalities and she was in the know of what music people were afraid to admit that liked.

Iida, for instance, for all he looked like he'd be a classical instrumental type of guy, he loved bubblegum pop. He listened to the positive cheerful kinda stuff you'd expect to be playing in an eight year old girls room. He jogged to it even. It was slightly obnoxious because Jirou loathed that kind of music but you can't look at his smile and deny him anything. Iida was a saint so he could keep his happy music.

Uraraka interestingly had a very similar music taste to Bakugou, a fact that Jirou found hilarious but couldn't talk about because she's pretty sure Bakugou would try to blow her up. Her parents had several 'not everything you hear is yours to share' talks with her growing up and Jirou was pretty sure music taste was in that category. Bakugou and Uraraka would have to find out they both like street rap and screamo on their own. She'd just have to stand back and silently ship them from afar.

The list goes on:

Tsuyu ironically (or intentionally?) loves hip-hop. She also sometimes unironically listens to frog croaking recordings.

Midoriya, as far as she can tell, listens to almost exclusively hero movie soundtracks.

Tokoyami continues to be goth by listening to every goth and industrial band he could get his hands on. But he also has the strange habit of listening to the blues.

Aoyama continues to be french and goth in his obscure music taste. He also, unsurprisingly, had a thing for show tunes and musicals. And his passion for creole music was as odd as it was impressive. Strictly speaking Jirou found his taste to be a bit of a hot mess, but with like some impressively good music mixed in. he was just odd.

Todoroki is emo as fuck.

Momo, bless her cultured heart, listens to stuff on the foreign charts all the time and has some actual tastes. She was the type to listen to anything at least once.

Shoji, the heathen, has admitted that he hates music. He says it's because he too has sensitive hearing and rather than embracing it, he's come to find it annoying in general.

Mina likes anything with a good dance beat. Club remixes were definitely a common thing on her playlist.

Kirishima likes rock in general but usually anything that can be considered motivational. Jirou is actually pretty sure that he picks songs that he likes from movies.

Sero likes metal and rap. Hehe… wrap.

Kaminari was a dubstep nerd, listening to techno and house music like there was no tomorrow. Jirou didn't know if her classmates were sticking to puns with their powers to be ironic or because of genuine enjoyment but puns were funny so she was willing to roll with it.

Sato loved love songs, the sappier the better. He also liked chiptune.

Ojiro's music taste was nothing impressive or standout. Though Jirou has noticed that he tends to listen to things with real instruments more than electronic or computerized music. His taste seems really down to earth. He definitely had a thing for acoustic guitar

Kouda likes classical music, mainly piano and violin music. He has a taste for opera too and Jirou's pretty sure she's heard him playing the piano. He's on her 'cool dude' list.

Shinsou listens to music related to memes. That one where the cat plays the piano seems to be one of his favorites. But he also has a thing for synthwave and a very specific brand of

electronic indie remixes.

Hagakure, along with pop, liked jazz and big band music. Jirou could picture her swing dancing in her room. It was cute

Even the teachers were obvious in there tastes.

Aizawa unsurprisingly listened to a lot of grunge and indie rock. He also listened to a shit ton of educational podcasts. She was learning right with him sometimes, though it was frustrating when he went out of her range and she only got half the information.

Present Mic, as a radio host, had to keep up with the latest music releases and the top twenties. It was cool that she sometimes got to listen to songs before they were released but she was pretty sure he was dead inside from listening to the same top twenties as her, over and over for years. Outside of that he tended to listen to instrumental or ambient music. Usually stuff more complex and interesting than the stuff that made it to the charts. Jirou felt a sort of solidarity with him.

Midnight was a classical kind of lady. She also seemed to really like opera and choral stuff. She kept things classy as far as music taste went.

Cementos likes rock. Again with the puns.

Snipe listened to country but also weird industrial remixes of country songs. Jirou didn't get it. It was weird and different, but she didn't get it.

Ectoplasm listens to nightcore.

All Might listened to hair metal. It was kinda hilarious because she kept hearing him sing along with it. He wasn't a great singer and he definitely couldn't hit the higher notes but he tried really hard and he was definitely enjoying himself. It made Jirou happy.

Nedzu… Nedzu was mystery. Apart from Eye of the Tiger playing on repeat somewhere, his office was sound proof.

All in all, Jirou felt very confident in her knowledge of her classmates music taste. She was rarely surprised anymore. Until one day she heard it…

Her favorite song by one of her favorite bands playing in the distance. Romulus by the bad Vendetta.

Someone knew her band. Someone was listening to *her* kind of music.

She had to find them.

As one might expect, Jirou had a montage of running around following the sound of the song and wondering around campus looking stupid with her earlobes twisting around like some kind of tracking device. The person continued listening to the entire album of vendetta meaning they were on her list of cool people

Her adventure included awkwardly walking in on all might wearing a pink apron and oven mitts as he baked something, getting into a small, dumb fist fight with a 1-b kid (really the kid started the fight and she just knocked him out, finding Aizawa in his caterpillar sleeping bag on top of a vending machine of all places (it was like the worlds weirdest where's waldo), and finally 'bro-hugging' Kaminari and Kirishima outside of the school because apparently they were having some kind of moment that she interrupted.

Montage passed.

She found Midoriya training in the forest a pair of headphones in his ears a focused look on his face. He was training, doing some martial art moves that Jirou was pretty sure he learned from Uraraka. His expression was very focused. In his ears Vendetta was playing Spirit Runner.

“Midoriya,” she had to sat a few times before she broke his concentration.

He startled badly “Jirou! What… what are you doing out here?”

“Followed the music,” she said matter-of-factly.

He blinked and then blushed. “Ah! Was i playing it to loud! I’m sorry. I know most people don’t like my kind of music so I try not to-”

“Midoriya,” Jirou cut him off, mildly annoyed that he was apologizing for listening to her favorite band. “Shut up. I love Vendetta.”

“Oh you do?” Midoriya said looking pleasantly surprised. “Oh good then. I like them too... “

He trailed off awkwardly. Jirou stared him down. “You said your music. So you listen to this kind of music more often than this?”

Midoriya took a step back at her intensity. “Well, yeah? Back before I got my quirk, when everyone thought I was quirkless I had this whole phase of looking up successful quirkeless people and vendetta’s lead singer, Miko Haritaki, is quirkless. So I listened to them and I found I really related to there lyrics and the music was good so I just kept listening to them and it kind of spiraled out of control from there….”

Jirou moved forward and clasped Midoriya’s hands in hers. Staring deep into his eyes, she said, “Marry me!”

“Ehhhhh!!!???” was Midoriya’s immediate flustered response. “Aren’t we both gay-ish?”

“That’s not important right now, Midoriya,” Jirou easily brushed their sexuality aside. “What’s important is that you’re the first ‘Vendetta’ fan that I’ve met outside a concert or online forum. I need someone with actual music taste in my life! Midoriya, will you be my platonic music bride?”

Midoriya was squinting like he didn’t fully understand what she was saying. He was blushing out of control. “O-okay?”

“Okay. Now tell me what else you have on that little music player you have and why I haven’t heard you cranking it in the dorms?.”

“Oh… well I didn’t want to bother anyone. Kacchan says it’s annoying…”

“ ‘Kacchan’ is a twat.” Jirou said sharply. “This is a well established fact and anyone who listens to Lori Maverick can’t be trusted.”

“Kacchan listens to Lori Maverick?” Midoriya snickered behind his hand. It was cute.

“Yes!” Jirou snapped. “It’s super annoying. Way more annoying than anything I’ve heard you listen to. Movie soundtracks at least usually don’t have bed singing.”

“You know I listen to movie soundtracks!?” Midoriya looked mortified. Jirou kinda hated how insecure he was sometimes. She understood why but it seemed utterly irrational sometimes.

“Stop changing the subject, Midoriya,” Jirou crossed her arms over her chest. “What else do you listen to?”

Midoriya flushed again. “Um... well I really like AJJ and the Doubtful Dead… my mom has gotten me into some of the more classic punk bands like Monstrous and Naked in a Phonebooth. Er… because I’m goth some of my tastes drift that way too, but sometimes I find their music a little too aesthetic if that makes sense. Like punk just puts the feelings and

politics out there, goth music tries so hard to be edgy. I appreciate the movement and the fashion but the music just kinda feels like it's trying too hard…"

Jirou felt like she was grinning like a madman. "Midoriya. I love you so much right now."

"You- you like them too?" Midoriya asked timidly.

Jirou moved her hands up to his shoulder. "I love them. Naked in a Phonebooth is classic. And the fact that you're actually able to criticize music means you are moving up the friend chart. Keep going."

"Jirou, you're being kind of weird."

"Midoriya, you don't understand," Jirou said serious. "I *love* punk music. And I haven't had anyone to talk to about it because no one else in class likes punk music. You are a fucking diamond in the rough and I need someone to feed my passion. I need to rant about punk music to someone. I need you."

Midoriya blinked a few times as he processed her words. "Well, okay. If- if you really need this…"

Jirou hugged him.

"Okay, but the bridge in Firefly is clearly the emotional core of the album. The vocals hold so much emotion."

"Anyone can cut out most of the instruments and sing in the near silence, Mido," Jirou said crossing her arms over her chest. "It's a common technique. It doesn't make the song good."

“That’s not the point, Jirou,” Midoriya bickered. “The entire album was building to this moment. The chaos of Howl and Tarot. The grief of Ugly Thing and My Mistakes. The repetitive imagery about firelight and eyes and that one tune er…” Midoriya hummed the part he was thinking of because unlike Jirou, he wasn’t great at describing or even reading music. “He repeated that theme like six times through the album and it was all building to this moment. It’s like storytelling, Jirou, and this moment was when the epiphany happened. When that one theme is at its rawest. And then he built on it. Then that theme became the climax of the album. Clearly Firefly is the best song.”

“Agh!” Jirou said frustrated. “This isn’t just about the story, Mido, it’s about the music writing, too. And Firefly has the weakest guitar playing on the entire album.”

“Not every song can be five chord jazz shit. It’s punk, Jirou, lower your expectations.”

Jirou let out an offended gasp. “Are you sure you’re listening to the same Vendetta as me? Their guitarist sometimes gets up to six chords. Pay attention. And I will keep my expectations as high as I please, thank you very much.”

“I’m not saying being able to play six chords is a bad thing. I’m saying expecting it in every song is unreasonable. I mean have you heard Wyvern Mask? I’m pretty sure they only know three chords.”

“I hate Wyvern Mask!”

Midoriya gasped, “But Back on Track goes so hard! It’s a classic!”

“Just because it’s a classic doesn’t mean it’s good,” Jirou scoffed. “I mean look at Mozart. His name is plastered in history books and he sucks.”

“You are not *seriously* comparing Wyvern Mask to Mozart.”

“Hey, Jirou, can I borrow your…” Kaminari trailed off when he entered Jirou’s room without knocking. What he found was Midoriya bench pressing Jirou while some angry sounding music played from her radio. “What’re you doing?”

“Arguing,” the two of them said in unison. Midoriya pushed Jirou into the air. She scowled irritably arms crossed over her chest.

Kaminari slowly backed out of the room.

“So Stain has a copycat killer now?” Iida said looking pale.

“Could it be the same person Stain warned you about in his letter?” Todoroki asked.

“I don’t know,” Midoriya said seriously.

“Letter?” Iida asked said eyes widening.

“Mido!” Jirou shouted sliding into the cafeteria. “I’m borrowing him.” she said grabbing Midoriya by the back of the shirt and dragging him back out of the room.

It happened very quickly for anyone watching.

“Jirou, what is it? Is something wrong?” Midoriya said sounding very concerned.

“The new album was released today!” she grinned wildly.

It took a moment for Midoriya to get it. “The vendetta album? Jirou, I was having an important conversation. You can’t just-”

“I pre-ordered two.” she said pulling the Cd's out of her bag.

Midoriya made a somewhat girlish squeal. “Oh my god! How did you get on the list. I tried so hard and I snipe Ebay sales. I know what I’m doing and even I didn’t get in on time.”

“I have my ways,” Jirou said mysteriously. She held one of the albums out for him. “A gift.”

Midoriya suddenly turned really pink. “I-I couldn’t… wasn’t it expensive?

“Do you not want it?”

“No, I want it!” Midoriya said quickly taking the CD. “I- thank you.”

“What are friends for?” Jirou said playfully.

“I’ll pay you back,” Midoriya said seriously.

“Like I said, it’s not a problem,” Jirou said a little too smugly.

“Ugh, I want to listen to all of it now. But there’s only ten minutes of lunch left and I need to explain my serial killer fan letter to Iida before Todoroki decides to explain it badly.”

“Your what?”

“I’ll see you after school,” Midoriya quickly hugged Jirou and thanked her one last time before disappearing back into the cafeteria.

“Your what?” Jirou repeated at his back.

“Jirou!” Midoriya shouted. She went flying under Shoji’s rough attack. She managed to catch herself on a flagpole by one of her earphone jacks but it seriously hurt to put her full body weight on her ear like this.

“Hero names in the field,” All Might’s voice called over the speakers.

Midoriya grit his teeth. Shoji was swooping at him now and he was doing a fair job of dodging and weaving but Hagakure was somewhere in the field and Jirou was the one more likely to find her.

Jirou struggled to climb up to the flagpole so she’d be in a more stable position. Midoriya was hiding in the rubble of the fake city and and occasionally throwing flash bombs in an attempt to disorient his attacker. Jirou could her him muttering from her position though it was hard to pick up the exact words.

The problem with fighting against someone who could match her hearing was that it made talking strategy with Midoriya a lot harder. He was smart, he probably had a plan in the fluffy head of his but it didn’t do her a lot of good when he couldn’t share it.

Ow. ow ow.

“Hey, Tentacole!” Midoriya shouted. He jumped out from behind a rock and had his arm seemingly wrapped around something invisible. “Looking for someone?”

“Invisagirl!” Shoji gasped and he took a wild swoop towards her partner.

“Earphone Jack!” Midoriya shouted tensing. “The Howling, The Crow album, track 7.”

What? Wait track 7… that was ‘I’ll catch you when you fall’. Oh shit. *Oh shit* .

Okay. Okay.

She trusted Midoriya.

She closed her eyes and let go of the flagpole. the moment of free fall made her stomach drop before someone crashed into her. The moment of roaring wind was cut off my a humongous crash and a rough landing.

Jirou opened her eyes to find, she and Midoriya lying inside the building she’d been hanging from. Shattered glass and brick was everywhere. Midoriya seemed to have taken most of the hit for her. His shoulder was bleeding from the broken glass. Jirou was willing to bet she was bleeding too.

“You.” Jirou said dragging herself up to her knees. “Are. Nuts. What if I didn’t get your reference?”

“I know you, Earphone Jack,” Midoriya said, wincing as he stood. “And besides I couldn’t let Shoji know I was going for you and you’ve said before he doesn’t like music. He had no way of getting the code.”

“I don’t think anyone had a way of getting that code,” Jirou scowled.

Midoriya brushed some dust off his knees. “We need to move. I might have knocked Tentacole out but Invisigirl is still running around somewhere. Keep an ear out.”

“I thought you had her?” Jirou frowned, but did what he said, listening for heartbeats. “And you got Tentacole?”

“It’s not particularly hard to pretend to hold onto an invisible person.”

“That was a bluff!?”

Midoriya nodded and they quickly slid through the halls waiting or a blitz attack. Their main objective today was to take out the heroes and get to the sewers. Also to hide some files from the heroes. But All Might more or less said the file took second priority to catching the villains. Most of the hero teams that went before them had dismissed that part of the assignment as too difficult. The files in this case were a flash drive handed to the villains at the beginning of the assignment. It could be hidden anywhere.

In their case, Midoriya had swallowed it, saying “They can’t find something where they’d never look.”

“I knocked Tentacole out when I used him as a step to get up to you.” Midoriya was saying in the present. “He is currently Mississippi smashed into the street.”

“You really are crazy,” Jirou said rather fondly. Than she heard it, running footsteps. “Incoming”

“In a Heartbeat?” Midoriya said falling into a fighting position. He’d reference another song.

“You’re such a dork,” Jirou grinned, plugging her jacks into her shin speakers. “I recommend you cover your ears.”

Midoriya didn’t need to be told twice.

They won.

“Is all you ever talk to Jirou about is music?” Jirou overheard Uraraka saying one day. She couldn’t help but pause what she was doing.

“Well, yeah, i mean kind of?” Midoriya said back. Jirou calculated they were in Uraraka’s room. “Is there something wrong with that?”

“No,” Uraraka said. “It’s just a little weird is all. I mean most friendships are based on more, you know? I mean you talk to us about other things, right? why not her?”

“I-it’s not like we can’t have a normal conversation. It’s just… I don’t know… talking about music is fun.”

Uraraka huffed. “Don’t look so down. I don’t mean any of this as a bad thing. It’s nice that you have someone you can talk about music with. Even if it feels like you’re speaking a different language.”

“We’re not that bad...”

“You kinda are,” Uraraka said in a teasing tone.

“Oh.”

There was an pause.

“I… I could show you the music we listen to if you want. O-only if you want. That way you wouldn’t feel so lost.”

Jirou couldn’t help but grin. Yes, Midoriya! Corrupt the normals!

However at the back of her head, Uraraka's words stuck.

"It's really loud, isn't it?" Uraraka said, headphones covering her ears. "And angry…"

"That's kind of the point," Jirou said, placing one of her cheaper acoustic guitars in Midoriya's hands. "We'll start with the basics since you're inexperienced. It'll take work and your hands will cramp like crazy the first couple of weeks."

"Er…" Midoriya said shooting his scarred hand a look. "I'm not sure I can do this."

"You'll be fine. Everyone sucks at first."

It took fifteen minutes of correcting Midoriya's grip before Uraraka finally pulled her headphones down and said it. "Jirou, Deku has nerve damage in his right hand. He can't hold it like that."

Oh.

Oh, that made sense… "Why didn't you tell me?"

Midoriya flushed and rubbed the back of his head. "I'm sorry… I just really wanted to learn…"

Jirou huffed, trying to ignore the wave of sudden guilt. Really this was something she should have already know. She's sure she's heard it being talked about before. "We'll find you and instrument you can play. Come on."

Uraraka gave her a measuring look before returning to the music.

“Jirou! They’re coming to town! They’re coming to town!” Midoriya said hopping and smiling like a sunbeam. “Vendetta is coming to town!”

“I know!” Jirou said smiling genuinely. “God, i wish I could go see them. But tickets are so expensive. Ugh. I guess it’s just nice knowing we’ll be in the same town as them.”

“Oh, i’ll spot you your ticket,” Midoriya said, like it was nothing. “I can pay you back for the city.”

“I- Midoriya, those tickets cost a fortune. Way more than the CD. You can’t buy those for me.”

“But I want to,” Midoriya said looking utterly innocent. “I mean what are friends for.”

“Midoriya, that is a lot of money,” Jirou said seriously.

“I’ve been making some money from my podcast,” Midoriya said, like that was all there was to it. “Besides I want to go with you.”

“I can’t-”

“Ah the age old argument,” Shinsou said walking past and using Midoriya’s head as an armrest. “Midoriya, we’ve talked about this.”

“It’s not a big deal-”

“What do you mean?” Jirou said narrowing her eyes and the tall boy.

“Midoriya,” Shinsou said fondly flicking Midoriya in the temple. Midoriya turned very pink in the checks and pouted. “Has this thing, about owing people.”

“I said it was a big deal. And it’s not a thing.” Midoriya said shaking Shinsou’s arm off him.

“He hates owing people even if it’s a gift or just a nice deed. He feels he has to repay them even if no one wants him to. Usually he goes overboard.”

“I just want to go to a concert with Jirou.”

“Just like you only wanted to get get Uraraka that space heater. Or to knit Todoroki that All Might plush.”

“Shinsou!”

“He and Iida have been having a passive aggressive gift off since before I joined the class. I’m pretty sure Iida is winning right now.”

“ *Shinsou!* ”

Yet again Jirou found herself having an ‘I should have already known this’ moment. It wasn’t like she wasn’t aware of her class around her. She was close with most of the class. She and Shinsou even shared a similar sense of sarcastic humor. Momo was one of the most attractive and intelligent people she’s ever met. And Kaminari… was Kaminari, which in her opinion, wasn’t a bad thing, though he was a great deal more annoying than most.

And since finding out that Midoriya was into punk too, she’d felt close to him. It was rare that she got to share her passion with people as loudly as she wanted to, and once she’d gotten past Midoriya’s initial shyness, he definitely shared her enthusiasm. His interest

wasn't as significant as passion for heroes and analysis, but his interest with analysis could apply to everything including music so it worked out. Their talks had been smart and she had the opportunity to introduce him to music and know that he might actually like it the way that she liked it.

But guilt was starting to sneak in, in moment like this. Things that close friends were supposed to know that she didn't. Hell, Shinsou knew this and he hadn't been in their class as long as she had.

"Hey," Jirou found herself saying. "I got to go do something. See you too later."

And she left.

"Shinsou, why did you do that?"

"What? Everyone knows you have a thing."

"It's not a thing."

"It's a thing."

"I just wanted to go to a concert with my friend. There's nothing wrong with that!"

"I don't think that's why she ran away, anyway."

"Huh?"

"I don't know, man, I don't want to stick my nose where it doesn't belong."

“What do you mean?”

“She looked kind of guilty…”

“What does she have to be guilty about?”

“I don’t know.”

“…”

“...”

“I’m gonna go after her.”

Despite her advantage of being able to hear him coming, Midoriya proved alarmingly good at tracking her down.

Eventually she let him catch up just to ask, “How the hell do you keep finding me?”

Jirou had her hands on her knees and tried to catch her breath. She knew she had no chance of outrunning Midoriya if he used his quirk so it felt a bit like he was going easy on her. But she appreciated it because her legs were killing her.

Midoriya wasn’t even out of breath. “Nedzu.” he said as if that was all the explanation he needed. It kinda was. Though she had to wonder if it was a ‘something Nedzu taught him how to do’ thing or a ‘Nedzu has endless camera’s and is directly telling Midoriya’ thing. It was probably the first thing because Nedzu didn’t seem the type to just give answers but Jesus Christ was it creepy.

“So are you going to tell me what’s wrong?” Midoriya asked earnestly. “Or am I being nosey. Should I just back off? Do you need me to back off? Am I reading the mood wrong? I only want-”

“I don’t know you!” Jirou said gesturing at him in exasperation.

“…” Midoriya squinted at her in that innocent way that he seems to have mastered. “Yes, you do?”

“Then why don’t I know things like you have nerve damage or a gift thing or a ton of stuff. I mean I don’t even know your favorite color. Our friendship is based entirely on music. Like shouldn’t there be more?”

“I don’t know,” Midoriya said looking unsure. “I mean… doesn’t that stuff come later. You get to know someone by knowing them, right?”

“You don’t know?” Jirou said feeling tired.

“Friendship in general is new to me…” Midoriya said looking sheepish. “I’ve only had friends since I came to U.A and every relationship is so different. I’m still figuring things out.”

Jirou looked at his genuine smile and dropped her head feeling like she was in a losing battle.

“It’s green by the way.”

“What?”

“My favorite color,” Midoriya said pointing up at his hair. “I know it seems kind of obvious. But it makes me think of my mom and nature. It comforts me.”

It wasn’t obvious. Jirou would have guessed that his favorite color was a tie between the colors of All Might's costume color palette.

“You like nature, huh?” Jirou said taking the bone he was throwing her.

“Yeah. I used to go hiking all the time when I was younger...”

“Here,” Midoriya said, laying a Vendetta ticket flat on her desk.

“Midoriya, I can’t take this.” Jirou said, shaking her head and lifter her eyes to look at her friend.

He was smiling gently. “You can pay me back by being the first guest on my podcast. I want you to come with me. I’ve… I’ve never gotten to go to a concert with a friend before. I’d like to go with you.”

Jirou’s eyes widened and she felt her cheeks flush. She twiddled with one of earlobes. “I’ve never gone with a friend before either… Midoriya, thank you.”

Midoriya’s smile brightened. “No problem. You need to brace yourself for the podcast, though, my fans can get a little crazy and since our special will be on music research will be necessary and some people might be a little rude but that’s just because they’re passionate. They might try to quiz you on heroes, too, even if i open with the whole ‘You’re not as into fandom as me’ thing. So i’ll make you some note cards for you.”

Jirou grinned, “You’re really passionate about this, aren’t you?”

“Kinda,” Midoriya said rubbing the back of his head. “It’s just nice to have my hero analysis appreciated and to feel like i’m actually doing something with it, you know? Talking about it on my blog is fun too, but I was never as popular there as i am with this. And I actually get to talk to people, like out-loud. It’s fun.”

“I get it,” Jirou said smiling warmly. She looked over the ticket one last time and then leaned forward to ask Midoriya more about his passion.

She’d learn.

There was always more to learn.

The concert was going well. Of course it was going well. That’s an understatement. The concert was going awesome. Vendetta was the best and for once Jirou wasn’t going alone. She was with a friend, someone who liked the band as much as she did.

Granted concerts weren’t the best place to get to know someone they were loud and basically all she and Midoriya were doing friend wise were jumping up and down holding onto each other and sometimes shouting and fangirling. Midoriya had brought out some of his goth garb and had somehow produced a Vendetta t-shirt that Jirou was totally jealous of and also probably going to steal at some point. Jirou was wearing a shirt for a different band.

The band was great.the fans were great. Even the mosh pit was great, despite being bruising. The crowd was nice and that made a difference. Jirou had been to shows before where the crowd were assholes and would intentionally push you down and try to start fights. A vendetta show if you fell down in the fit someone would help you up and take you to the edge to see if you were okay.

Jirou lost Midoriya in the crowd a few times but when she found him again he was grinning like a madman and it made her heart soar. He was way cooler than she expected him to be.

Then someone had to ruin it.

A freaking villain had to show up and ruin it because of course they did.

The crowd started evacuating as Jirou grabbed onto Midoriya and looked around for a possible hero in the crowd.

“What are you kids doing here!?” A man with long yellow hair and Vendetta tank top asked.

“Present Mic?” Midoriya gasped. *That* was Present Mic!?

Right. Go with the flow. Fight the danger in front of them. The lead singer of Vendetta was now taken captive by the… folder villain. Weird quirk. Whatever.

“You both have your provisional licence?” Present Mic asked turning towards the stage.

Both Jirou and Midoriya nodded. “Okay I suggest you cover your ears this concert is about to get loud.”

The fight went surprisingly fast between the three of them.

“That’s something else you should know about me,” Midoriya said looking guilty as Present Mic walked the villain to the waiting police cars. “I’m a villain magnet...”

Jirou raised a skeptical eyebrow but any sarcastic comment was cut off by the lead singer of Vendetta, Miko Haritaki, approaching them. Jirou was cool enough not to squeal like an annoying fangirl. Midoriya was not.

“Hey,” The singer said smiling a little sheepishly at Midoriya’s full blown freak out. “It was really cool what you guys did back there. I’ve always been a fan of heroes. Thanks for the save.”

Jirou felt her fangirl levels steadily rising. “Hehe, no problem! It’s going to be our job after all. Always glad to help. We’re big fans of you, too.” Jirou tried to play it cool. She was not very successful.

Miko grinned. “Well if you ever want backstage tickets-” he handed them each each a card. “You know who to call.”

Midoriya passed out.

Jirou shook her head.

There was always more to learn about this kid.

Chapter End Notes

Was this chapter just an excuse to list my headcanons of class-a’s music tastes? Absolutely.

-All the bands were made up because this takes place in the future. Except for Eye of the Tiger, which is by survivor
-Aizawa on a vending machine is funny but I do not recommend you try it yourself. Vending machines are actually very top heavy and statistically kill more people yearly than sharks.
-If the band name Naked in a Phonebooth caught your attention, it’s the name of a band I wrote a short story about in high school. The whole phone booth nudity thing did happen. There was a lot of alcohol involved. And a dog rescue. Someone got shot. It was a wild ride. It was fictional but it reflected some of my experience on the punk scene.
-By gayish, Midoriya means he’s pansexual. Because why not? Jirou is an absolute lesbian
-Who caught the kind of obvious Legend of Zelda reference?
-A friendly mosh pit can make or break a concert. Just because you're thrashing into each other doesn't mean you have to be a dick

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A Sacrifice He's Willing To Make

Chapter by serenawitchwriter

Chapter Summary

Deku is a hero

Chapter Notes

this wasn't the chapter i wanted to release next but the one i did has been fighting me and is currently like 15 pages long and no where near done, so i'm moving this one up.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Kagome Natsuki was in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Things happened so quickly and at the same time so slowly. One moment she was driving to work the next thing she knew it there was a bang and she was skidding out of control and no amount of struggling with the wheel stopped the car from flipping and skidding. There was screaming metal and sparks and she was thrown in different directions, only held in place by her seat belt.

She landed dazed and in pain, upside down.

It had happened so quickly. So jarringly that it took her a moment to understand what happened. She'd crashed her car. She had flipped her car.

"Are you okay?" a voice said approaching. Someone had approached her car. Kagome turned and saw a green haired boy kneeling in the shattered glass to peer through her shattered window.

“W-what…?” she said slowly.

“I saw your crash,” the boy said looking around anxiously. “Your car is on the train tracks. So i’m going to have to get you out.. This isn’t a safe to place to be. Can you move?”

“Uh… yeah…” she said wiggling her fingers and toes. A shooting pain shot through her leg. “I think my legs stuck…”

The boy checked and nodded. “It looks like the dashboards collapsed. I can pull it free, don’t worry. Could you put your hands on the roof? Your gonna fall when it releases and I don’t want you to hurt yourself worse.”

“I… yes… right…” Kagome said clumsily moving her hand to press against the roof.

The boy pulled the door open with another screech of metal, but it seemed surprisingly easy for him. She wondered if that was his quirk. Than he crawled into the car and started pulling along the dashboard.

“My names Deku,” the boy said keeping the conversation going as he carefully moved his hands under the dashboard. “I’m training to be a hero. What’s your name?”

“I… I’m Kagome…” she said. A hero in training? That was surprising. There was a loud noise as he finally popped the dashboard free. She was glad he warned her to catch herself because the newfound freedom she almost fell on her head.

“It’s nice to meet you,” Deku said. Reaching up and unbuckling her and helping catch her when she did fall this time.

In the distance there was the sudden scream of a horn. Deku’s eyes widened. And he urgently started dragging her out of the car.

There was another blare of a horn and Kagome didn't have time to scream before the shining light of the metro was rushing towards them and she felt a force slamming into her clear of the tracks and impossible screaming noise of shredded metal and sparks and destruction.

Kagome and the boy rolled clear of the train, debris reigning around them. Cement burned her skin but and it took a few second to catch her breath and understand what just happened.

The metro. It had almost hit them. The boy had slammed her out of the way. He acted so quickly.

The panic attack that she was on the edge of was taking full control now. She couldn't breath. GOD THEY- SHE HAD ALMOST DIED. THEY ALMOST DIED. if the boy hadn't- ohmygodohmygodohmygod. She would have been a smear of blood on the pavement. She would have been a statistic in the city ledger. Ohgod her mom was right about moving to the city being too dangerous. Oh god. Oh god.

The boy, the hero was beside her rubbing her back soothingly. "It's okay," he said, voice cracking a bit. "It's okay. I called the heroes. They're on their way along with an ambulance. Everything is okay. You're safe now."

"Oh my god," Kagome said, slightly hysterically. "Oh my god."

"Are you hurt anywhere? Do you feel any pain?" the boy said, still somehow keeping his head even though his face was smeared with grease and soot.

"Oh my god." Kagome was shaking.

"Hey, it's okay," Deku said, smiling shakily. "You're gonna be okay, we're safe now. Okay I need you to breath with me."

Steadily, he calmed her down and Kagome was finally starting to regain her senses by the time ambulance sirens could be heard.

Then her mind put together something she was too panicked to notice before. The boy had one of his hands wrapped in his shirt. And the shirt was soaking through with something red. “OHMYGOD YOU’RE BLEEDING!!!”

The boy winced at how loud Kagome screamed or maybe it was in pain from his bleeding hand. Oh god. Oh godohgodohgodohgod…

“Really, it’s okay,” the boy said forcing a pained smile. “I’ll be fine when the ambulance gets here. What matters right now is that you’re safe.”

A wave a guilt overran Kagome’s mind. Here she was being comforted and calmed down someone more injured than her. What the hell was wrong with her? Oh my god! This kid was a child. A child got injured while saving her. Jesus Christ.

“Well, um, I should at very least look at it,” Kagome said feeling sick. “T-to make sure it’s okay.”

“No.” the boy said in a tone that left no room for argument. “I need to keep pressure on it until the paramedics can look at it.”

“I- are you sure?” Kagome tried to ignore the traitorous relief she felt at his words.

“Yes,” the boy nodded still gritting his teeth. “I told you, didn’t I? I’m training to be a hero. I-I know what I’m doing.”

His words would have been more reassuring if there wasn’t blood soaking through his shirt. Too quickly.

“Hey, are you guys okay?” a voice called down the street. Kagome blinked and looked towards the voice to see that the metro had come to a stop and was evacuating it’s passengers.

“As-as good as can be expected,” the boy said, keeping his determined expression. “I-I need an ambulance though. I hurt my hand and I think my friend is in shock.”

“Okay,” the person said. “Um.. R.O.U.S stay with them until help arrives.”

Another person approached them, and Kagome vaguely recognized her as a pro-hero. Was the- was the other guy a pro-hero too? She was really out of it. Jesus, she almost died.

“Ohmygod,” Deku said staring up at the hero with wide eyes. “You’re pro-hero R.O.U.S, the Innocent Hero. You can turn into a mouse like child-form. And you can jump from building to building without taking damage, as well as fit through small spaces. You’re most primarily known for your sting operations against child trafficking rings.”

“Yep-yes, I am,” R.O.U.S said looking uncomfortable. “You aren’t supposed to know that. Can you let me see your injury please, need to keep our priorities straight, when the ambulance gets here, right?”

If he weren’t already ashen, Kagome could have sworn, Deku got paler. Almost shyly he let the hero see his injured hand and quickly covered it back up. It was enough to make the color drain out of the mouse hero’s face too.

“Hey, Ruleworld,” R.O.U.S shouted, looking a little sick. “I’m gonna need everyone who isn’t injured to start canvassing the area for two missing fingers. Maybe they can still be saved.”

“Oh fuck!” the hero Ruleworld shouted back in English from where they were talking to a few of the other people from the train.. “Okay!”

Kagome felt faint. “Two- two missing fingers…”

The green haired boy, despite his pained expression, looked sheepish. “I’ll be fine.”

That was not reassuring at all.

“Okay, okay,” R.O.U.S said keeping a level head. “Can you tell me where exactly you were when the train crashed?”

“He’s missing his fingers.” Kagome squeaked, still not fully grasping the situation.

“We were on the tracks,” Deku said efficiently. “Her car crashed. I was getting her out.”

R.O.U.S. regarded the wreckage that once was Kagome’s car. She winced. “Well you’re lucky to be alive then. We’ll see about finding your fingers, don’t worry, kid. We’ll take care of you.”

Deku offered a crooked smile, “Well, it could have been a lot worse. Can’t say I’ve had worse than this, though.”

He said it in a strange self-deprecating way. Like he was trying to get a laugh. No one was laughing. Kagome felt on the edge of passing out.

She didn’t but time did a wonky time skip where suddenly she was deaf and the world was moving around her until someone lifted her by the arm and pulled her towards an ambulance. Deku was rushed forward fast than she was. She also had a blanket around her shoulders now when did that happen?

It felt like a long time until reality settled into place again. The ringing in her ears settled into the dull roar of the background noise in a hospital. She could feel the blanket around her more solidly. Soft heavy fleece. Weighted even. Her body ached from scratches and bruises she got when she wasn’t paying attention. Eventually a nurse came in and they talked. She wasn’t injured badly. She’d just been in shock and she had a concussion.

The doctors agreed she was very lucky.

“What about the boy?” she had to asked. “Its he okay? His hand…?”

Oh god his hand. The blood. It was her fault. It was all her fault oh god.

“He just got out of surgery,” the nurse said calmly. “I can’t legally tell you more but he’ll wake up in a few hours and you can check on him then, I’m sure.”

When Kagome approached to the room the boy was staying in she found him being yelled at by a man with long dark hair and a white scarf, while a woman who looked like him cried hysterically. They were his parents she assumed.

“Um…” she said awkwardly. All eyes instantly turned on her. She coughed not meeting their eyes. “I... uh… I just wanted to say thank you. Your son, Deku, he saved me. If it weren’t for him i’d probably be dead. So… thank you.”

“It’s no problem,” Deku said without hesitation. His mother cried harder and hugged him tightly. His father just pinched the bridge of his nose.

“But- but your hand…” she said glancing at the thick white bandages.

The boy glances at it and then forced a shaky smile onto his face. “I’m just missing a bit of my pinkie, it’s okay. We saved my ring finger so it’s not a big deal. It could have been a lot worse.”

The ringing in her ears was back. It was like the world was tilting dangerously. The father was at her side in a flash, catching her so she didn’t collapse. “I’m- I’m sorry! It’s all my fault I’m *so* sorry.”

“It’s fine,” Deku said and Kagome’s heart seemed to thud hard in her chest. Because he met her eyes and completely meant it. He’d lost a finger because of her. And he didn’t care. He really thought it was fine. He didn’t care that he lost a finger for her.

If anything his mother cried harder and said something in his ear that Kagome couldn’t hear. The father just looked tired.

“Thank you for your concern. He said dryly.

“He… he doesn’t care?” Kagome gasped at him.

“Yes,” the man said escorting her out of the room. “He might still be in denial or he might just be like that. We don’t know. It’s a problem. It’s not your fault.”

“He’s a child…” she said, tears running down her face.

“He’s stubborn.” the man said flatly.

“...he’s a hero.” she said.

Hero Deku. A hero in training. He’d live the rest of his life without a finger because of her. She’d remember that smile for the rest of her life. ‘I’m fine’ he said. Hero Deku.

She didn’t know what was more terrifying. His lack of hesitance of rushing in or his lack of reaction to pain. It was like he wasn’t human. Oh my god.

‘It’s fine’ he smiled.

Either he was going to be one of the best heroes since all might or he was going to die young, Kagome understood.

He was Hero Deku, she would remember.

Chapter End Notes

-everyone say hi to my friends' oc's ROUS and Ruleworld
-I wrote this in basically one setting and the entire time i just kept facepalming and going 'he would though'. I didn't want to maim him, 'he would though'
-also Midoriya having no idea how to comfort people to the point of being terrifying is my aesthetic.
-and then there's the Dadziawa cameo

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The Enemy of My Enemy

Chapter by serenawitchwriter

Chapter Summary

Midoriya unknowingly gives Dabi an opportunity

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Dabi carefully glued the prosthetic onto his face with the practice of a professional makeup artist. The reality was that he had done this countless times. He couldn't go out without his burned and barely stitched together face drawing people's attention, so the prosthetic was his disguise. It was in his skin tone and gave him all the appearance of a normal citizen. Dabi found it ironic that his citizen identity wore more of a mask than his villain identity but he supposes that was just life.

Smoothing out the edges with makeup, Dabi sighed at his supposedly handsome face. He thankfully took after his mother and the prosthetic reflected this but he could never get rid of his damned father's eyes. Even in this mask his stupid piercing blue eyes shined back at him, a constant reminder of his father. He hated them.

Shaking his head, Dabi pulled out of his spiral of self-loathing as best as he could. Which was to say, not very well, but that wasn't the point.

Fuyumi had called him recently and arranged for him, that is Todoroki Touya, to meet someone. She was cagey about who exactly he was meeting and why, but she was clear that it was important and that it would somehow benefit them.

He knew she wouldn't contact him if it wasn't important.

The restaurant was in a nicer part of town than he lived but it wasn't expensive. It was hero themed, of course, because what wasn't hero themed in this shitty world anymore. Oh well, it couldn't be helped. He walked in and ignored the happy music playing on the radio. His eyes traced every person sitting in the store.

His eyes landed on Midoriya Izuku, who looked at him with no recognition in his eyes.

Dabi considered walking out then and there. But the fact that he'd asked for Dabi's other identity and didn't seem to recognize him was enough to have Dabi intrigued. Midoriya didn't particularly strike him as the stupid type, but he might be dense. And if worse came to worse, Dabi didn't see the boy winning a fight in these close quarters. Plus he was curious.

He slipped into the chair, letting an easy smile fall on his lips, though he felt nothing but suspicion. "You wouldn't happen to know a Todoroki Fuyumi, would you?"

The boy lit up, "Todoroki Touya?"

"Got it in one," Dabi said hailing a waitress. "I believe you have me at a disadvantage."

Midoriya smiled, "Midoriya Izuku, pleased to meet you."

Midoriya shook Dabi's gloved hand, eyes clearly taking note of the oddity. Dabi didn't bother explaining. There were far stranger things in the world after all. He might as well accept it.

They ordered their meals and Midoriya seemed too nervous for Dabi's liking. Dabi kept his eyes peeled for any heroes or police or even a wire. He didn't see any traces of a trap but he wouldn't let himself relax.

Midoriya seemed to shift and flickered from the friendly boy to someone more confident and professional. Dabi wouldn't call it his 'battlefield persona' but it was definitely more impressive than the way he normally carried himself.

“I’ll cut to the chase,” Midoriya said, with a shockingly sharp smile. “I hate your father and want to take him down.”

Dabi’s sat up straight in his chair. From what little he knew about the boy, he didn’t know how to hate. He was always sunshine and bunnies or grit and determination. The perfect hero everyone wanted to follow. The sheer… artic quality of his words didn’t really fit with his image, especially considering he had Stain’s stamp of approval. But Dabi could tell that the boy wasn’t lying or faking. His hatred of Endeavor was genuine.

“You’ve got my attention.”

Midoriya’s smile became a bit more genuine. “Okay, so, obviously you’re already aware that your dad is piece of shit. Fuyumi warned me that you were probably unaware of some of the household torment he’s pulled since you left, but she already gave me her report and so did Shouto so that’s okay. Early stuff helps build the case either way. Any information you can provide me is appreciated. Trails or rumors you’ve heard about him recently are also helpful. Really any information you can give me about Enji’s shit behavior is useful. The more public ones I’ll do my best to verify with multiple sources-”

“I’m sorry but what are you doing?” Dabi interrupted, slightly overwhelmed by the amount of words that were said to him in less than a minute. The green haired boy blinked up at him and blushed.

“Oh, whoops, I got ahead of myself,” Midoriya rubbed the back of his head looking sheepish. He reached into his bag and pulled out one of the thickest folders Dabi had ever seen. It was almost comically large. “I’m compiling a criminal case against your father. A lot of his crimes have gone by under the radar due to cover ups or the cases being closed to the public. Anything bad that does get out is either stifled by his PR team or his lawyers. I have to admit they’re very good at their jobs. I hadn’t even noticed there was anything wrong with him until I started looking. And I’m a fanboy so that’s saying something.”

Dabi could only stare, mouth slightly open. This was far from what he was expecting the conversation to be. “You’re saying all that is evidence against my father?”

Midoriya nodded and slid the file over to Dabi so he could look at it. “And analysis on how he fights, his weaknesses and how to best take him down. As #2 hero, he won’t make that easy, so the real heroes are going to need all the help they can get. And don’t worry, I have more than one copy of that file so if this one gets damaged somehow” -somehow being Endeavor- “I won’t have lost anything.”

The kid could talk. Being more soporific in nature, Dabi wasn’t exactly contributing to the conversation but Midoriya didn’t seem to mind. “#2?” Dabi questioned slightly amused. The boy knew that he was number one now but he was apparently petty enough not to acknowledge it.

“Oh, you know,” Midoriya said taking a sip of tea. “Because he’s a piece of shit.”

Dabi choked on his laugh caught off guard boy’s blunt delivery. He did not trust this kid as far as he could throw him but he was definitely winning him over.

Carefully, Dabi started paging through the file. Then his eyes widened and his stomach dropped out from under him. This was detailed. This was scarily, obsessively detailed. This kid might know more about Endeavor than the man knew about himself. There were sources and references. There were newspaper articles and interviews. Pictures of damaged property and burn scars and bruises and broken limbs. The analysis was actually hard for Dabi to follow. He was a reasonably smart man but this was info heavy, detailed and thought out, rambling the way the boy talked. There was so much there. All of it was useful, some of it was delightfully sadistic and it just kept going.

He paused at Fuyumi’s interview.

“Is any of this admissible in court if it was gathered by you?” Dabi knew he was being a coward for putting it off. But it’d been years since he’d been in that house. Years since he first used his blue flames. He could admit that he was afraid to find out what had happened since he left.

Midoriya looked suddenly sheepish. “It’s not admissible at the moment, no…”

Dabi suddenly looked sharply at him.

“But.” Midoriya said quickly. “It will be when I get my PI license.”

“PI license?” Dabi asked incredulously.

“I’m going to become a private investigator. I figured it would help in my hero career. Most underground heroes have one and it’ll grant me more freedom in my analysis and investigation. It makes the information I gather more useful to police officers-”

“You’re twelve.”

“Sixteen,” Midoriya corrected. “And I’ve been taking the college course for this for over a year. I’ll be able to hand this file to the police before I’m out of UA.”

Okay. That was scary. Impressive but scary.

“...and you want me to add to the file,” Dabi said gloved finger lingering on the page that had his younger sister’s handwriting.

“If you want. I’ll leave out anything you want to keep private, but any little bit you remember is helpful.” Midoriya smiled kindly.

“And my siblings have added to this?” Dabi said with slight wonder.

Midoriya nodded, “And your mother.”

That earned him a pause. Dabi stared back down at the file with new eyes. “You talked to my mother…” he said softly, heart aching in a way it hasn’t in a long time.

“As have some detectives who I’m in contact with,” Midoriya reached out and patted Dabi’s arm. Dabi noticed he favored the hand that wasn’t covered in bandages but didn’t bother wondering about the wound. Rumor has it that the boy was always hurt. “We’ll get justice for her.”

Dabi couldn’t help but flip past his sister’s and brother’s interviews to get to his mom. He paused when he saw Shouto had given an interview too. He figured since Shouto started using their fathers fire he was beyond help but lingering over his words Dabi realizes he couldn’t be more wrong.

Shouto was full of anger it seemed, knew the right person to blame, and the gritty but familiar details of their fathers training was brutal to read about like his sister he had taken pictures of some of the worse bruises or burns. It wasn’t as bad as it could be he knew. Dabi knew all to well what his father could do what he got serious but this was bad for training.

Dabi also found, much to his guilt, more personality in Shouto’s descriptions than he knew his brother had. Wasn’t that fucked up? He was learning more about his brother from his descriptions of abuse than he learned in the seven years he lived in the same house as him.

Midoriya left him to his reading but Dabi felt the boy’s eyes on him as though he was trying to determine where he knew him from. Apparently he wasn’t so different looking to escape Midoriya’s notice for long. But Dabi no longer cared about that, far more invested in the work that was in front of him.

Shouto had grown up in a worse hell than he did.

“He trained me, too, you know,” Dabi said, softly eyes still locked on Shouto’s words. It was weird, he could sense the trust his brother had for Midoriya, the friendship that was between them. It… it made him sad, and maybe a little jealous. “When my quirk first manifested he saw me as a miniature him, tried to teach me Hellfire, tried to shape me into a hero too.”

Midoriya had an empty notebook and pen in front of him so quickly it was slightly startling. Dabi stared for a moment but shook his head when the boy gestured to go on.

“I was never good enough,” Dabi said, going back to looking at the page where his little brother lived. “My fire was never hot enough, I was never fast enough, or strong enough… or angry enough. He thought… he thought because I had the same quirk as him, that I would be exactly like him, that I would follow in his footsteps and bring honor to the family name. Mother tried to protect me of course, but she was pregnant with Shouto when it started, he was still trying for a more powerful kid, so he wouldn’t touch her when she tried to interfere, instead he’d take it out worse on me. I was just four, the bastard.”

Dabi glanced up at Midoriya and saw that the boy’s eyes were watery with empathy. It was sorta fascinating to see. Dabi had never met anyone who’d cry for him. A cynical part of him knew that the world was going to eat this boy alive. Kindness was something you couldn't hold onto.

“His hell training went on until Shouto’s quirk manifested,” Dabi said bitterly. “Then he threw me away like i was a piece of garbage. The irony was that he still expected me to follow in his footsteps. He wanted me to train to be a hero on my own. He still wanted me to be him even as he turned his eyes towards a new prize. Shouto was going be his masterpiece, everything that I never was.”

Dabi laughed, though there was no humor in it. Midoriya for his part looked quietly angry but he was still writing away in his new notebook.

“I was lucky,” Dabi admitted. “For the first time I got to interact and play with my siblings. I got the opportunity to have a childhood again. Throwing me away was probably the best thing that could have happened to me, though I didn’t know it at the time. *That’s* the fucked up thing.” Dabi spat., “I still wanted daddy’s love. I was still trying to be what he wanted me to be and it didn’t matter to him. The moment Shouto's, perfect little Shouto’s quirk manifested I stopped existing to him. I was just another stepping stone in Shouto’s future, someone for Shouto to surpass.

“To make matters worse, mom was losing it. She was doing everything in her power to protect us, to protect perfect Shouto, but she only ever got hurt for it. Every day for a year, he’d try to train Shouto and everyday for a year she’d stand in the way and get hit to. I *hate* him. *I hate him so much.”*

Dabi took a deep breath, so that he didn't accidentally use his quirk. Midoriya's continued to write. He didn't say anything, seeming to understand enough to know that Dabi didn't want him to say anything.

"I kept trying, back then. I was eight and i didn't understand what I did wrong even when mom told me I didn't do anything wrong, I was still trying. I wanted to be better than Shouto, I wanted to prove I could be a hero, prove that I was good enough. I kept training, I kept fighting and it was still for nothing. He didn't care. He *never* cared."

Dabi was getting too emotional. He hated himself for that.

"Everything fell apart when mom lost it… you know about Shouto's burn," he said gesturing at the notebook. Midoriya silently nodded and it was like someone was twisting their hand in his gut. It was strange to find something so private and intimate in the hands of a stranger. "We knew she was losing it, me and the others. I don't know about Shouto, but me and the twins new she was cracking. She was always crying and muttering to herself. She hated looking at me…" Dabi shook his head, decade old hurt still feeling fresh. "She… I looked like him. I've dyed my hair since than. But I looked like him and she hated that. It… it scared her."

Dabi couldn't look at Midoriya anymore his eyes were left to stare at the file in front of him. His brothers and sister still children in the pages, but innocence long gone.

"I started avoiding her," Dabi said softly. "I don't know if that hurt her feelings and made things worse or if it was the right thing to do but I knew that looking at me hurt her so I didn't let her see me. I… I might be lucky that it was Shouto she hurt that day… I know I shouldn't think of it like that but she could have easily hurt me the way she hurt Shouto and… I'm glad it wasn't me."

Dabi felt a hand on his arm and it was very hard not to lash out. Midoriya gave his arm a gentle squeeze and Dabi looked up to see intense unreadable eyes. Dabi was suddenly struck by how vulnerable he was letting himself be in front of someone he considered an enemy. He pulled away and Midoriya quickly turned back to his notebook.

Chilled, Dabi forced himself to go on, more aware of where he was than before. "Ehm, anyway, when she was taken away afterwards… home got a lot worse. Endeavor had never

been in such a foul mood. He couldn't train Shouto when he was injured, he couldn't take his anger out on mom anymore. He was notably much crueler to villains. He threw himself into he work… and then there was me." Dabi felt his scars prickle underneath his skin. "He turned his eyes back to me. Went back to training me, just in case Shouto was too injured to be his successor. He needed me to be perfect again… only I'd gone soft."

Dabi clenched his fists. "I'd been trying, I really had, but it wasn't enough. It was never going to be enough. I remember him going on and on about how Shouto was better, how he'd been so far ahead of me when I was his age. It just… agh! He was impossible. I tried so hard but his standards were impossible. He didn't treat me like I was human… I don't think he knows what being human even is."

"Not from what I've seen," Midoriya muttered. Dabi was certain he hadn't meant to say that aloud but he suddenly liked the kid a lot more.

Dabi debated for a long moment whether telling the next part was worth it. He'd reveal who he was but it would give him a chance to turn the world against his father. The real question was, did Midoriya hate his father more than he feared or hated Dabi. Dabi was a villain, but the file made it clear enough that Endeavor was a villain too. One with a lot more power than him.

Indecisive, Dabi gently closed the file. "Do you really believe this will be enough? Do you really think the government will take are side on this?"

Midoriya frowned thoughtfully. "They will if we make them."

Dabi narrowed his eyes, not entirely sure what he meant. "They'll cover it up, won't they? Dad's too important to the current political climate. The government will fall apart without him."

Dabi filled every word he said with bitterness and he saw Midoriya's eyes take on a sudden sharpness.

“If the government can handle the loss of one so called hero, than it deserves to fall to begin with,” he said. Dabi was startled by the radical opinion. “We’ve lost better heroes than Endeavor, and if anything having someone like him in power does more damage to the public’s opinion of heroes and the government than good. I intend to make it so the Japanese Government is better off cutting their losses.”

“...what do you mean?”

Midoriya actually smirked. It wasn’t an expression he expected to see on such an innocent looking face, but then again Midoriya wasn’t what he expected at all. He seemed far to knowing for someone his age. It was a bit off putting.

“I have a plan- plans, back up plans, too. Basically when me and Shouto’s lawyers take the case before court we’re going to take it as far as it can go without releasing it to the media and as far as it can go with the Japanese Government. If they try to cover it up and don’t bring the charges against Endeavor than we’ll take it before the UNHL. the UNHL will take over the case, and then charges will not only be brought up against endeavor but also the government itself. They’ll even send heroes from other countries to help keep the nation stable while things are settled. If the news breaks before the case breaks then we’ll contact the UNHL anyway and again we have the help needed to keep the country from destabilizing.”

“You can’t be serious,” Dabi said staring at the boy, mouth dropped open. He was expecting something naive and cute about how surely the government would do the right thing because goodness and love and heroes and all that stuff. He wasn’t expecting an actually insane political power play. “If you involve the United Nation’s Hero League you’ll be throwing Japan to the wolves. You’ll tell the entire world our entire nation is too weak to handle it’s own affairs.”

“If the Japanese Government can’t take Endeavor out of power than it is too weak to handle its own affairs,” Midoriya said matter-of-factly. Holy shit, this kid was amazing. “With luck, threatening to bring in the big guns will be enough for the Japanese Government to get their shit together before things get to bad. A court case against Endeavor will also bring other issues to light and with luck result in a government overhaul of the hero system. It’ll mean there will be a spike in villain activity but that’ll just lead to the heroes picking up the slack and acting as a more unified force.”

“You.. you’re actually fucking kidding me,” Dabi said amazed. “You’re actually fucking serious. You’re actually willing to tear down the government to take endeavor down? You’re willing to go that freaking far?”

Midoriya shot a small glance around the restaurant to make sure Dabi’s shouting hadn’t drawn any lingering stares. Then he nodded. “I believe that our government is supposed to be able to put villains in prison. If it can’t do that, than it needs to fixed. It’s a simple as that.”

Dabi laughed out loud, utterly delighted that he was meeting a hero like this. A real honest to god hero. Holy shit. Eat your heart out, All Might, Midoriya was coming for your title. “And you really believe the government will do this? what if it blows up in your face? What if the villains win? What if some other nation sees how destabilized our country is and tried to take over it?”

Midoriya frowned darkly in response. “It’s better than the alternative.”

“Alternative?” Dabi asked still utterly elated that he was talking to a possible anarchist.

“All that happening and the world knowing *no one* tried to fix it.”

That cut off Dabi’s grin. “... you mean to say that if news got out about Endeavor's crimes, we could have a civil war on our hands anyway?”

Midoriya nodded seriously. Dabi’s eyes went back to the thick file he had on Endeavor. If the government had been doing their jobs it wouldn’t be that thick, he acknowledged.

To be honest, Dabi had never had his eye on world politics or the hero system itself. He’d leave the tantrums about that to Shigaraki. Dabi was a simple man with a simple need. That need was to kill his father. He’d known for a long time that the government wasn't going to help him so he went about it a different way. He figured there was an amount of dramatic irony in his dad trying so hard to make a hero only to make the villain that killed him.

And now here he had a boy that was actually trying to help him. Actually trying to put Endeavor away for real. Actually giving a shit.

Endeavor wouldn't live long in prison. Hell he wouldn't live long if the court case became public. Someone with the right quirk would kill him. So the question no was, was Dabi willing to give anyone else the right to kill his father.

The answer was no. Endeavor was his and only his. Dabi was the one who was going to kill Endeavor, no one else.

But… Midoriya's plan had merits. Dabi didn't care for the idea of the Japan having a civil war, even if he knew Shigaraki would. Midoriya handling things legal would ensure that not only would the shitty government get fixed but that Endeavor won't die a hero. After all if Dabi just straight up kills him, than it'd be easy for the world to write that bastard as a martyr who died on the field of battle, someone fucking honorable. But if Midoriya raked him through the mud than the world would know Dabi was justified. Dabi could have his cake and eat it too.

Smiling now in a way that pulled at his fake skin Dabi raised his eyes to meet the green-eyed boys. "Okay," he said almost casually. "I'll admit it, you won me over."

Midoriya was frowning now. Sensing something off. He had good instincts, though they probably would have served him better if the said something sooner.

"This," Dabi said gesturing at his face. "Is a prosthetic." He watched with grim satisfaction as the boys eyes widened and his identity clicked into place. the boy slowly sat up straight and watched Dab with new eyes.

He was calculating now. Taking measure of how much danger he was in, on what Dabi would do, on what he could do. Dabi tracked his hands knowing he'd be going for his phone. Dabi tilted his head lazily back towards the customer that sat behind him, easily within reach. It didn't really matter though. With his range Dabi could easily burn down this entire restaurant down and everyone in it.

He was sure Midoriya knew that.

After a long tense moment where Dabi waited for the hero to act, finally the boy folded his hands and forced himself to relax his shoulders. Dabi could still see how tense he was but it was an impressive effort.

“We share a common enemy, right?” Midoriya voice trembling. “I-I see no reason why we can’t both walk out of here peacefully. m-me with my information, y-you with the knowledge that I am working against your father…”

Dabi smiled amicably. “I’m glad you see it that way. Now would you like to keep going or would you like to run away now?”

Dabi found he quite enjoyed watching the boys eyes run calculations in his head. Slowly Midoriya picked his pen back up, he’d dropped it when he realized who Dabi was. Midoriya pressed it back to the page of his notebook. Man, this kid was nuts. Dabi liked that in a person.

“I got my scars when Shouto was still in the hospital. It was all daddy’s fault, want to hear how?”

Midoriya nodded, eyes still sharp and alert.

“He’d been training me extra hard those weeks. Undoubtedly taking out his stress from the whole mom situation on me and on that day in particular he was trying to teach me hell fire. He was relentless. He wouldn’t let me take a break even as i got more tired and dehydrated and weak. It was frustrating. I couldn’t do better when I felt so weak from his abuse, but he wouldn’t let me breath. He wouldn’t let up at all. And i remember just getting angrier and angrier. Because no matter how hard I tried it wouldn’t be enough for him. I wasn’t Shouto, I wasn’t perfect, i wasn’t what he wanted. He’d already thrown me away so what did i matter to him now? I was always going to be second best to him, so why did i need to try so hard. Why did he want me to do this so badly. What did it matter in the long run.

“I remember that, though, building in me even as he kicked me to the ground and made me puke and dry heave from exhaustion and pain. He just wouldn’t let up. He never does.”

Dabi watched Midoriya. His pen was still paused on the paper. It hadn’t moved.but his eyes held a thousand things, words and emotions that couldn’t be communicated out loud. Dabi thought he looked angry. He thought the boy could see what was coming even before Dabi said it.

“Then I had this thought. I thought, if he doesn’t let up he’s going to kill me. It was simple as that but it made me angry. More angry than I’ve ever been before, because I didn’t want to die. I was nine fucking years old and my dad was going to kill me? I think fucking not.”

Dabi took off his glove and examined the charred purple flesh. “That was when I discovered it. I call it cremation because it’s fire so hot that it even burns me,” Dabi laughed, mirthlessly. “I burned the entire west wing of the house down that day. When I finally passed out from pain i was rushed to the hospital and put in the room next to Shouto. He didn’t even know it.”

Midoriya was crying again. It was funny how it never felt like pity from him. Just empathy.

“I think dad was scared of me after that, or guilty,” Dabi shrugged. “He never looked at me again though. I was a good reminder of how much of a failure he was. Meanwhile i felt like i was breathing freely for the first time. Deciding to hate him was the best thing i’d ever done. I ran away not long after. I don’t think our doctors were surprised by that. If you haven’t yet, i recommend you interview them. They have some stories, i’m sure.”

“Doctor-patient confidentiality,” Midoriya commented almost automatically.

“Ah well,” Dabi said not really surprised. “Living on the streets and looking like shit wasn't a great experience and hunger makes your morals a lot looser, but it’ll never compare to the pain of first using Cremation and the hell that was living in that house. On the bright side I had a perfect way of defending myself now,and,” Dabi gestured at himself. “I don’t look like Endeavor anymore.”

Midoriya still looked at him with sympathy. But he offered no words of comfort. He didn't try to tell him everything was okay. Because it wasn't, it probably never would be.

If anything that made Dabi respect him more than anything else. Midoriya understood when words weren't needed.

Chuckling Dabi took a sip of his neglected soda and looked over his barely eaten meal. He hailed a waitress and asked for their check and a to go box. Waste not, want not after all.

"I should go," he said. "I won't have to worry about anyone following me, right? After all, we both have our information."

Midoriya's eyebrows drew together but he hummed, cautiously. "The enemy of my enemy is my friend, right?"

Dabi nodded in agreement. Whatever was easier. "I can't say we'll be friends next time me meet but i'm willing to play nice, if you are."

Midoriya nodded back. "...I won't stop you from leaving."

Dabi grinned, packed his dinner and threw some cash on the table. "Until next time then."

Dabi got up and started to leave. But Midoriya said one last thing at his back

"Oh and Todoroki-kun?" Midoriya said. He had that calculating again. Dabi had no idea what he was thinking. "While we're still on amicable terms, can I give you some friendly advice?"

Dabi snorted, "I don't see why not, kid."

Midoriya's face abruptly split into a predatory smile. "I suggest you distance yourself from Toga Himako. She has a file, too."

Dabi felt a strange chill and stared at the child incredulously. "You stalked the stalker back? You know that's just gonna make her like you more? She's already obsessed with you after you almost murdered her."

"I'm kinda counting on that." Midoriya said mysteriously.

Dabi stared at the boy for a long moment. He seemed so… young and yet Dabi wasn't going to underestimate him. Not on his life. The files were bad enough, but there was something else there. Something Dabi couldn't put his finger on. He had all the appearance of a good hero, someone with charisma and bravery and good intentions, but there was something under that…

"You know you'd make a good villain if you tried," He said.

Midoriya's smile turned sad. "I know…" He said too softly. "But that's what'll make me effective," His eyes flickered, like a candle blowing in the wind, shadows hiding just beyond their light. "Know your enemy, right?"

Dabi stared for a long silent moment, "... right."

This boy was who people were calling the next All Might.

But he wasn't that pure.

Good or evil, Dabi had a feeling that no matter what side this kid was on, he'd win.

A slow smile pulled at Dabi's lips as he silently slipped out of the restaurant. He could see through the window as the boy seemed to exhale and put his hand against his chest, looking

winded. Almost immediately Midoriya started to scribble in his notebook, clearly muttering to himself.

Dabi couldn’t wait to see him tear this fucking world apart.

Chapter End Notes

-I feel like I should clarify that i’m not up to date on the manga and though I’ve been spoiled a bit and know there was an Endeavor arc, I don’t know the details of it or if it effects this chapter.
-If you look at an earlier chapter you’ll notice that Midoriya is actually grooming his classmates for the government overhaul that’s coming, though they don't know that he's gonna be in the middle of it yet.
-Midoriya, your Nedzu is showing
-Izuku's still bitter about Toga attacking his mom

Discord:
https://discord.gg/SEkN8ee
Tumblr:
https://amarelibertius.tumblr.com

Bonus: X Marks the Spot

Chapter Summary

Midoriya and Co. discover some surprising things about his ancestors

Chapter Notes

you might have noticed that all these one shots exist in the same universe, this chapter exists outside that universe and that's why it's labeled as a bonus chapter

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It was Golden week at Yuuei and Midoriya invited a few of his friends over to hang out at his apartment. Currently in his home, was himself, Uraraka, Todoroki, Iida, Tsuyu as well as Kaminari, Ashido and Sero. His mother was home as well and they were currently going through some of Midoriya's family history.

"Dude, I bet you're entire family was just descendants of angels. I can't find a single bad picture of you or your mom here!" Kaminari said, going through some of Midoriya-san's old photos of her. Midoriya laughed.

"I don't think so. My mom, maybe. But definitely not me." he said.

"Izuku! Can you come and help me with this?" Inko Midoriya called to her son from the hallway. Midoriya got up and excused himself to go help his mom.

"What do you need help with, mom?" Izuku asked, approaching her in the hallway.

"Can you help me carry this old trunk into the living room? And be careful! Some old family heirlooms are in there." She says, moving aside to show a fairly large trunk that was browning and pretty rusted. Izuku grabbed hold of the handles and hauled it up.

“Holy! Mom, what’s in here!?” He asks her. Inko simply laughed and gave her son a very suspicious look.

“A captain never reveals her secrets….” She said and walked ahead of him, back into the main room. Izuku raised an eyebrow in confusion and followed his mom into the main room, placing the trunk on the floor.

“Midoriya-san, what’s in there?” Tsuyu asks Inko. The rest of the group looked up from the multiple photo albums and paid attention to the Midoriya.

“In here are some of the things that my ancestors kept and passed down in my family. It’s the origins of my side of the family, now I’m passing it on to Izuku. I know he will enjoy them as much as I did.” She said. The group looked at her curiously as she walked over to an old picture frame of herself and young Midoriya. She lifted it up and took a very old style key off cabinet and stuck into the ancient lock, opening the equally ancient trunk.

The trunk opened with a loud and ear piercing squeak. Everyone in the living room, except for Inko, covered their ears in pain.

“Ms. Midoriya, what, exactly, is in that trunk?” Iida asks, once the chest was fully opened. Sero and Midoriya looked inside the trunk, carefully.

“Dude! This is amazing!” Sero exclaims, laughing and sticking a pirate’s cap on Midoriya’s head. Kaminari and Ashido raced over and also started to go through the chest.

“I didn’t know we had this!” Izuku said to his mom as the others made their way to go through as well. Soon enough, everyone was decked out in pirate clothing and were reprising their respective roles, with Inko and Izuku as ‘Captain’ and ‘Lady’. Uraraka took one last look in the chest and gasped audibly.

“Deku-kun! Why are you wanted!?” She asks aloud, holding up a sheet of aged paper. Sure enough, there was a drawing of a person who resembled very closely to Izuku on the wanted

poster.

“‘Wanted, Dead or Alive: Terror of the Seven Seas, Midoriya Isamu. Reward: 100,000,000 gold’” Todoroki read off the paper.

“100,000,000 GOLD!?” Everyone except for Inko, Todoroki and Tsuyu, exclaimed. Mina collapsed onto the floor of the apartment in disbelief.

“Holy shit, Midoriya-san. What did your family *do* !?” She asked, in surprise and amazement. Izuku nodded in awe as well.

“Mom, what did our family do?” He asked. Inko sat down on the couch for a bit, trying to recall a few things.

“I don’t exactly remember…. Check inside the chest. I’m sure there was a scroll there that had a list of old crimes Isamu did during his time.” She said. Kaminari and Sero started digging through the chest some more before Sero found the scroll.

“Found it!” He cheered and opened it. His face paled, reading a bit of the list. “Dude. You come from a line of bloodshed.” He said. Kaminari ripped the scroll out of Sero’s hands, much to the other’s protest, and started reading out the crimes.

“ *Piracy,* obviously, *manslaughter, thievery, destruction of property, kid*…... ” Kaminari paled as well, drifting off from saying the next crimes.

“Kid what?” Ashido asked, intrigued. Kaminari swallowed, took a breath and continued to read the list.

“ *Kidnapping, torture, slavery,* I guess this would have been considered *sexual assault* and *rape* , going off what’s written here. And there’s so many more, each one worse than the last.” He said. He looked up at a pale Midoriya. “Dude.” He simply said. Midoriya simply took a breath to calm himself and spoke.

“I… It’s fine. That was hundreds of years in the past, so it doesn’t matter now.” He said. “We should probably pack this all up.” Izuku stood up shakily and made his way over to the chest.

“Wait, what’s this?” Izuku asks and brings out an old family album. “It looks hundreds of years old….” Iida approached the album and looked over it as well.

“It probably is. Ms. Midoriya did say a lot of old family heirlooms were in this trunk.” He said. “Open it.”

Izuku nodded and took the album back to the couch, where Uraraka, Todoroki and Tsuyu were still sitting. Mina, Kaminari and Sero came rushing over not to long after, abandoning the chest. Once everyone was seated behind or beside Izuku, he opened the album and began looking through the pictures, many of them yellow from age, some with writing, indecipherable, but many of them were intact.

“Hey, Midori.” Mina spoke up, looking at a picture that was supposedly taken a few hundred years ago. “Doesn’t that look like that big villain All Might fought not to long ago?” She asked. Izuku blinked and took a better look at the picture. In it, there were two men. One wore a well pressed suit, his curly black hair and eyes, looking straight at the camera. The other figure was also a grown man, but he was hunched over, his grimy, white hair covering his face. Izuku’s heart raced as he flipped through the other pictures from that time period, many of them of the man in the suit. He then flipped to a picture from 15 years ago.

His birth.

Under the picture, in neat cursive were the words ‘My son is finally in the world. Inko and I couldn’t be happier.’ And then signed ‘AFO’. Izuku closed the album, taking in everything he just saw.

“Midoriya? Are you okay?” Todoroki asks, looking at his friend. “You’re very pale.” Izuku muttered out something very quickly and quietly, his eyes staring off into a far away place as his breathing sped up slightly.

“Deku-kun? What did you say?” Uraraka asked, worried. The group was silent when Midoriya spoke these words.

“.....I’m All for One’s son……..”

Chapter End Notes

Omae wa mou
shindeiru
NANI!?

so, since this has come up a few times, i thought i'd explain. this fic has four authors because the idea originally came about between the group of us talking on discord. ViperFang dropped off the project to focus on another fic, NewPrussia also got caught up in real life and her own fics, and OnlyRoomForHope left to mourn her brother (Edited by Hope), leaving me, serenawitchwriter, as the main person writing this fic. Of the now 29 chapter, 3 chapters have been written by other authors, counting this one. the other two were Respect, our april fools chapter, and Eyeliner, the goth midoriya chapter. this chapter was by NewPrussia, who has finally returned to writing for and OnlyRoomForHope has *both* gotten her computer back *and decided to be productive once more* (again edited by Hope) so will be returning too. please give the other authors love and support -serenawitchwriter

Discord:
https://discord.gg/SEkN8ee
Tumblr:
https://amarelibertius.tumblr.com

Just Shy

Chapter by serenawitchwriter

Chapter Summary

How to make friends when you both have social anxiety [The un-recommended technique]

Chapter Notes

these boys share criminally little screen time. Also Trigger warning for social anxiety and also a corpse

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Amajiki was going to die.

He was surrounded by too many sunshine people and he was going to die.

It was supposed to be a joke. Amajiki thought it was a joke when Kirishima said it and Fatgum had laughed like it was a joke but apparently it was not a joke because here Togata and Midoriya Izuku were, smiling brightly and he was going to die because he was surrounded by too many sunshine people. Was this the universe playing a joke on him? Because he called himself Suneater?

“Um… ah… Amajiki-sensei?” Midoriya-san (-kun? -chan? What suffix does he use?) asked looking nervous. “A-are you okay?”

Amajiki turned away and leaned against the wall trying to get his heart rate under control. He was not prepared for this.

Togata laughed in that okay way and patted Amajiki on the back. “He’s okay, Midoriya-kun. He’s just a little nervous because I may have gushed about you a lot. He’ll be fine once he gets to know you better.”

“Y-you gush about me!?” Midoriya said sounding mortified. Which Amajiki didn’t entirely understand because as far as Amajiki could tell Midoriya was perfect and all Togata said was the truth.

Kirishima-kun laughed and slapped Midoriya on the shoulder, “Yeah! I have too, there’s a lot to gush about, bro!”

Midoriya made a squeaking noise.

“Yes! Yes!” Fatgum said enthusiastically. “I have heard a lot of good things! Some bad. Please do not break any bones or bring more villains to our doorstep if you can help it-”

“None of those attacks were my fault!”

“-but I am sure you will be a good fit for my agency! I will take very good care of you! Do not worry!”

“A-are you sure you don’t want my help rebuilding Nighteye’s agency…?” Midoriya asked Togata timidly.

“It’s fine,” Togata said, now comforting Midoriya. “You’ll learn more with a full time hero. You can’t throw away an opportunity like this and trust me, Fatgum will take great care of you, and so will Tamaki, right!?”

“Ah!” Amajiki gasped at being suddenly brought back into the conversation.

“If you need any help, just ask your senpai, here? He’ll steer you straight!” Togata put his arm around Amajiki’s shoulder and led him around so he was facing the small green haired boy again.

“Yeah!” Kirishima loudly agreed. “Senpai is great! He knows so much!”

Were they making fun of him? Oh god… Togata wouldn’t do that, Amajiki knew, but he must know how ill-equipped Amajiki was for this situation. Togata made him promise to look after Midoriya a couple of days ago but Amajiki didn’t really understand why. And now Kirishima was shouting about how great he was? Was this a trap? Were they pranking him?

“T-then t-thank you for having me! Please t-take good care of me!” Midoriya said too loudly and bowed.

“Remember what I told you about Mido-kun being skittish around new people,” Mirio whispered softly in Amajiki’s ear. “Right now he’s just as scared as you are.”

Amajiki found that very doubtful but he tried to take the comfort at face value. Midoriya did look very nervous.

“Well, we should celebrate!” Fatgum said enthusiastically. “Mirio-kun would you like to stay.”

“Ah, no,” Togata said bashfully. “I have to get back to work but thank you for your offer. I’ll see you around, guys. Good luck, Midoriya. Talk to you later, Tamaki.”

Midoriya continued to look like he was going to be sick. Amajiki related to him on a spiritual level. Amajiki waved goodbye to his friend anyway feel very awkward with the practical stranger standing beside him.

“Well,” Fatgum said clapping. “What do you want to eat, Midoriya? Nothing brings people together like food and from what I’ve heard you need all the support you can get.”

“What exactly have you been hearing about me?” Midoriya said sounding distressed.

“Don’t worry about it,” Fatgum waved the subject off easily. Which in Amajiki’s opinion was absolutely a reason to worry. It was a little surreal to see those words said to someone else. Does this mean that Amajiki is in on the joke? But he’s not?

…and now he was worrying too. What exactly were they not worrying about? What was going unsaid? What has Fatgum been hearing about Midoriya?

“So food? Do you like fried chicken, Midoriya? Ramen? Takoyaki?” Fatgum started listing a lot of foods. And Midoriya started looking overwhelmed.

“Er… I’m actually on a really strict diet,” The boy said looking mortified at having to interrupt.

Fatgum cut off his list and raised his eyebrows. “But surely for a celebration it is okay if you have a cheat day. We’ll take your diet into account but just for today...”

“I don’t know, sir,” Kirishima said consideringly. “Midoriya is pretty obsessive about his diet. Even at parties and stuff he’ll go and make something healthy. You just like healthy food, right, Midoriya?

Midoriya seemed to deflate further. “Er… not exactly? It’s kind of a quirk thing?”

“Your quirk depends on what you eat?” Amajiki asked blinking in surprise because he’d heard nothing about this.

“No,” Midoriya said very pink. He took a deep breath and spoke very quickly. “So the way my quirk first manifested was within the last two years and the doctors seem to think the triggering event was the muscle mass I developed training for U.A. Like it was my body's

way of saying ‘Hey you’re strong enough to use your quirk without exploding so here it is’. But like it still blew up my bones and stuff so obviously it would have been a lot worse if I didn’t have the muscle mass I already developed so-”

“Wait, that’s what you meant by blowing your limbs off!?” Kirishima gasped looking horrified. “I thought you were joking!”

“Why would I joke about that?” Midoriya squeaked. “That’s not funny!”

“That’s why you said it really fast and quietly,” Kirishima said looking distressed. “I thought, I don’t know, it was that dark humor thing people are always talking about… wait, does this mean the other fucked up stuff you mutter isn’t jokes?”

Midoriya looked like he wanted to sink into the floor. “No,” he said covering his face with his hand. “I don’t even know what you’ve heard me mutter but no, I just… I just think bad and out loud. Sorry…”

“Oh, no,” Kirishima said blushing guiltily. “It’s my bad for assuming. What you mutter isn’t even that bad. You’re good. We’re good. I’m sorry if I made you uncomfortable.”

“No, I know I say terrible things without a filter. I’m a terrible person. It’s not your fault.” Midoriya was still hiding behind his hands.

“No, you’re fine,” Kirishima insisted. “It’s-”

Fatgum cleared his throat, drawing their attention back to him. Midoriya peaked through his fingers and then quickly covered the rest of his face with his arms. Amajiki, for his part, was feeling intense secondhand embarrassment and he wasn’t sure how he was supposed to do in response to all this.

“As curious as I am to what all this is about,” Fatgum said cheerfully looking between Kirishima and a still basically hiding Midoriya. “We were talking about a concern with your

quirk, Midoriya?”

“U-um… right…” Midoriya said doing his best to fight down his obvious blush. “Er… anyway, yeah, my quirk. We… kinda figured… that um if it blows up my bones even at my current muscle mass. If my muscle mass were to drop below a certain point… well, rather than just go back into hibernation my quirk might do something... bad...”

“Like blow off your limbs,” Kirishima nodded, looking perturbed. Amajiki was also feeling perturbed but he understood better than most. His best friend, after all, constantly lived at risk of getting stuck or bisected by the things he passed through. And Amajiki constantly lived with the paranoia of getting stuck in some terrifying half-transformation. It took a lot of focus to use his power the way he wanted to and aesthetics often wasn’t the point. His thoughts would often spiral out of control into all the worse case scenarios from there. Obviously it wasn’t the same as living with the risk of blowing off your arms at any moment. Geez… Midoriya actually blew up his bones sometimes and that didn’t stop him. Oh geez. Amajiki needed to stop thinking. He needed to stop before things got too dark.

“So.. er…” Midoriya finished his thought. “I’m justifiably paranoid that if I don’t keep up my workout regimen and diet… I’ll… you know…”

Fatgum reached out and ruffled Midoriya’s hair. “We’ll get you your diet foods.” he said quietly. The look of soft gratefulness that crossed Midoriya’s face was not missed. “After all,” Fatgum shot the entire office a smile. “There is nothing we know better in the Fatgum office than the value of a good meal.”

Amajiki smiled genuinely at that, getting this joke. A lot of people in the office had ‘eater’ quirks, so dietary restrictions were as common as they were weird.

Kirishima‘s smile suddenly turned up in wattage. “I’ll surprise you!” he shouted.

“Huh?” Midoriya said, already looking surprised.

“I already know your meal restrictions! So I’ll surprise you with what we get. It’ll be the best thing I promise! Can I, Fatgum?”

Fatgum's face split into a wide smile too. “That’s a great idea. Surprises for a surprise party. Come, Kirishima! To the supermarket!”

And then they were gone.

It happened so fast that Amajiki and Midoriya were just left staring at the empty spot where they were.

Midoriya turned to Amajiki, eyebrows raised as if to ask ‘did that just happen?’. Amajiki swallowed thickly and nodded. “Things… can be… um… energetic around here…”

“Oh,” Midoriya said. And they lapsed into awkward silence.

Silence that just kept going…

...

And going…

…

…

And going...

Amajiki was, predictably, mid-negative-thought-spiral and internally shouting at himself for being too awkward to say anything. He wanted to say something. He wanted to say ‘Hey, do you want a tour of the building’ or something reasonable like that. But now they’ve both been quiet for too long and it would be awkward anyway. It wasn’t this awkward with Kirishima. But Kirishima actually broke the ice. But Amajiki couldn’t blame Midoriya for this. He was supposed to be the senpai. He was supposed to be cool and helpful and instead he was just sitting here...

In complete silence.

Occasionally Midoriya would open his mouth and look like he wanted to say something or ask something. But then they would make eye contact and he’d freeze and shut his mouth and look away. In disgust or nervousness? And his attempts weren’t actually helping Amajiki’s anxiety at all. Because what was he going to say and why was he so afraid to say it? Was Amajiki being too intimidating and weird? Someone as cool as Midoriya probably thought he was the lamest sempai out there. He was probably thinking about how he'd much rather be with Togata right now or his friend Kirishima or just anyone that wasn’t Amajiki with the exception of hopefully villains. Oh god what if Midoriya thought some villains were cooler than him. Some villains probably were cooler than him. That’s so embarrassing…

“U-uh hi, senpai,” Midoriya said, voice cracking. Amajiki wanted to cry. He was so nice. He’d already succeeded where Amajiki was failing. Amajiki should say something back. Before the silence got awkward again.

But it already had.

Oh geez.

Oh no.

“Tour-of-building-go-on?”

Amajiki inwardly (and outwardly) cringed at his own outburst that was definitely too loud. Midoriya winced but pasted a smile on his face.

“Um… sure?” he said sounding confused. Amajiki abruptly stood and gestured for Midoriya to follow because clearly body movements worked better than talking at the moment. Midoriya blessedly started following and kept up with Amajiki’s awkward gait.

The next twenty minutes went about as awkwardly. Midoriya kept giving him a supportive smile the way Togata would and Amajiki was starting to relax but every time he opened his mouth monosyllabic words still kept slipping out like “Office!’ or “Copier Room” and the more he did it the harder it was for him to stop. Midoriya was polite and started muttering about interesting things he saw in each room but Amajiki was torn because was this muttering he was supposed to hear and reply to? Or was it just Midoriya talking to himself? This was just, all of it, was going terribly.

Eventually they were called to the lunch room and Amajiki tried not to look too relieved. He and Midoriya kept shooting nervous looks at each other. And before they stepped into the room, Midoriya said, awkwardly but kindly, “This was... uh… fun, senpai.”

Amajiki doubted that. He’d been there. That was not his definition of fun. Midoriya was probably just being nice. Amajiki appreciated that. Amajiki gave him a thumbs up, still trying to swallow down the screaming mortification that was his social anxiety and his utter failure at life.

When they stepped into the room everyone pulled confetti poppers and Midoriya and Amajiki flinched in unison. Amajiki was beginning to like Midoriya, not only for his obvious kindness and similarity to Togata, but also his clear understanding of what is known as ‘fear of people’, or anthropophobia. Like obviously not the actual *phobia* phobia, he’d probably be screaming if he had that… or a hermit. Amajiki wanted to be a hermit. But he also wanted to be hero. Where was he?

…

Oh yeah, but like social anxiety phobia of people. The fundamental understanding that humans were weird and difficult creatures to understand. For a lot of people it was easy. They could just talk and understand people and be happy. Or they couldn't do it and thought they could do it and they just ignored other people's feelings. But for Amajiki and he's guessing (what if he's wrong?) for Midoriya it wasn't easy. Amajiki genuinely wanted to understand people and be kind, but he tended to miss cues and overthink things.

So… actually, 'phobia of people' wasn't the right description. He should stop this line of thinking before he embarrassed himself.

Anyway, aside from that thought vomit he ended up basically completely avoiding Midoriya for the entire small party. Midoriya didn't seem to notice, caught up in the sunshine energy that was Fatgum and Kirishima and most of the other members of the agency. Midoriya started radiating sunshine right back and Amajiki was just left in the corner to watch, unless someone tried to bring him into the circle of smiling people. Which happened a lot actually because everyone was so nice and he really liked them a lot and they seemed to like him too so that was cool.

Midoriya notably would occasionally shoot him those looks like he wanted to say something but he didn't and it was stressing Amajiki out.

But not enough for him to change the weird holding pattern of awkward he and Midoriya had fallen into.

Later, after the lunch party, where they ended up eating katsudon and for some reason protein bars, they gathered around in the boardroom and started actually working.

"Okay," Fatgum said seriously. "Now we need to focus on the next mission."

He showed them that the most recent cork-board had a map of the city. Red pins dotted everywhere attacks had happened. Amajiki observed the emerging pattern and frowned.

"It's like an eye," Midoriya observed playing with his lip. He looked thoughtful.

Fatgum nodded. “We’ve noticed, too. It’s appears to be the killers hunting ground. He never kills outside of this area.”

Midoriya hummed and flipped through the packet he was given. Kirishima chose to do the same. “Do we know if those marks are where the actual fights happened or are they just body dumps?”

Fatgum looked impressed and Kirishima shot Midoriya a smile. “As far as we can tell that is where the actual fights happened. Our forensics experts have checked and based their assumptions on blood splatter patterns in the areas. We also have eyewitness testimony.”

Kirishima frowned, “That’s a really specific pattern to be having fights in. You’d think it’d be more chaotic.”

Midoriya nodded, “Meaning either this killer is setting up traps or he has a way of knowing that his victims are going to be where he wants them to be when he want them to be. Do we have a read on his quirk?”

“Not exactly,” Amajiki said, honestly impressed by the intelligence Midoriya was already showing. Amajiki had already been briefed on the case. “What you said is most of it. But he’s also fast and precise. Some witnesses said they’ve seen his eyes glowing but that’s been hard to confirm since those testimonies are rare and he knows how to not be seen.”

“While he shares the Hero Killers MO, he also has some very distinct differences,” Fatgum said seriously. “The pattern is one of them. He’s also been known to play with and taunt the heroes he deems worthy. He’ll attack, defeat them, and then leave the hero alive. It’s like he wants to get caught.”

“Or he’s gloating,” Kirishima said holding his chin.

Midoriya started muttering and Amajiki felt his ear flick slightly to catch the words, “...same as in the letter. If Stain really did train him then that could probably account for his speed. It’s

not necessarily his quirk…”

“What’s that, Deku?” Fatgum asked. Midoriya jumped.

“Ah! Sorry. sir, just thinking out loud,” Midoriya said guiltily.

Kirishima smacked him on the back, a move that Amajiki knew hurt despite its innocence. Midoriya took it in stride however. “He does this all the time at school! He’s the mumble machine.”

Midoriya flushed and yet again Amajiki found himself wondering if that was a joke or not. He flashed a crooked smile just to be safe. Midoriya turned redder.

“Well, back on task,” Fatgum said offering the two boys a quick fond smile. “Since the villain works in such a specific area he should be easier to track down. We already have extra police posted in the area but he tends to avoid them and wait for the bigger fish to arrive.”

“The heroes,” Midoriya confirmed. Then he squinted. “Stain was also known to take out villains. Has he taken out any of them, too?”

“Yes,” Fatgum nodded. “Those reports should be in your file, though we can’t confirm all of them as the same perp.”

Midoriya nodded eyes scanning his papers once more. “Do you think if we tracked down the villains or thugs within his territory we might find him?”

Smart, Amajiki thought shyly. Midoriya reminded him a lot of Togata when he got serious. Fatgum grinned and said, “Now, you’re thinking like a hero! However finding him isn’t the problem. Defeating him is. So, boys...”

Kirishima smiled his sharp smile looking pumped. Midoriya clenched his fists, his eyes shining brightly. Amajiki decided to smile more seriously. Fatgum leaned forward hands flat on the table and eyes taking that specific glint.

“Who’s ready to hunt down a serial killer?”

Things seemed a lot less exciting and a lot more awkward when Fatgum decided to split them up. Mostly because he left Amajiki in charge of Midoriya. Amajiki wondered if it was so he could show Midoriya the ropes but Midoriya had already been through several internships. (Amajiki wasn’t sure if he kept getting dropped because he was too good or too abysmal. He seemed good.) so Midoriya probably had a good idea what he was doing. But he was with a new group so that might mean things would be different for him. Everyone did things a little differently. Would it be weird if Amajiki asked? Or would Midoriya think he was being presumptuous and weird? But really it would be arrogant for Midoriya to think he knew everything…

“Senpai?” Midoriya asked suddenly. Oh god, Amajiki didn’t say all of that out loud, did he? “You’re wondering a bit out of the territory... “

Midoriya had the city map open on his phone. That was smart. Though Amajiki doubted he had the same overlay as what was on the pin board. Amajiki came back over to him and nodded silently, not actually knowing what to say.

As if sensing his tension, Midoriya started babbling slightly hysterically. He was backpedaling and telling Amajiki how it wasn’t his fault that he wondered out of the territory and that might have been wise because the killer might strike outside of their territory just because it seemed like a rule doesn’t mean he couldn’t break pattern.

Coughing awkwardly Amajiki said, “It’s okay. You were right.”

Midoriya abruptly cut himself off looking embarrassed. He even covered his mouth with his hands and turned very red. Maybe Togata was right and this kid was like him. It was kind of a relief. Amajiki was expecting someone larger than life the way people kept describing him, but up close Midoriya was very human.

“ *SENPAI* !”

Amajiki didn’t have time to think. He didn’t have time to move. He barely even had time to sense what was coming. One moment he was just standing on the sidewalk. The next he was nine feet off the ground, the only thing suspending him being the metal chain wrapped around his throat, choking him.

“Hmm, just an intern,” someone said above him. Amajiki’s hand had instinctively went to his throat to claw at the suffocating jewelry. Gravity itself was the enemy. Amajiki wasn’t even sure if he could use his quirk. He doubted he could swallow. Time seemed to stretch forever as he fought for breathe. “How boring.”

And like that he was dropped.

Midoriya caught him and Amajiki was embarrassingly left to cough and catch his breath while Midoriya stood defensively between him and the villain. Some example he was setting.

The villain was perched on a lamp post. He was holding twin knives attached by an long thin chain. His outfit was a subdued gold, almost as though it was stained by smoke, but in general it seemed practical, except for the jacket which looked like a tailcoat a butler would wear and a long black cape that flowed dramatically in the wind. He wore a strange eye-patch that covered half his face the way a phantom of the opera mask would only the fabric, which possibly made of a weaved wire, covered his actual eye the way a mask wouldn’t. It was shaped to his face and spaced so he could definitely see through it but you couldn’t. His hair, like his odd suit, was a dirty gold and was long enough to reach his neck. The overall effect was… weird. Amajiki didn’t think he’d be winning any costume contests

As Amajiki finally regained his breath and rubbed his throat, the villain looked them over putting a finger to his lips as if considering something. Then he tilted his head almost playfully and pointed to Midoriya.

“You’re Hero Deku!” the villain said smirking. Amajiki’s eyes narrowed. It was strange for a villain to recognize an intern by their hero name. Amajiki swallowed some things out of his pocket despite the pain in his throat. A rock to harden his skin against the inevitable knife

attacks and some cold octopus takoyaki because tentacles was one of the things he was better at fighting with. He then attempted to send a hardened tentacle attack at the man while he was busy monologuing. Admittedly Amajiki missed a lot of what he said but he was gloating at Midoriya about something or another.

The villain borderline teleported away and landed on another lamp post. A different knife appeared in the man's hand. It was a tactical knife with a serrated edge. The most notable thing about it was a bloodstained cloth tied around the handle. "I don't suppose you recognize this, Deku?"

Midoriya's bright green eyes narrowed. "Stain."

Amajiki was thankful for his practice controlling his anxiety in the field because suddenly he had a lot of bad thoughts to sort through later, like; this man was the serial killer they were looking for? That was weirdly easy. And now they have to fight a man who's know to take down actual pro heroes for fun? They're going to do so well against him, without there actual pro hero there, Amajiki thought sarcastically.. Also Midoriya knows Stain? Why would Midoriya recognize the knife? Why does the villain already know Midoriya?

Amajiki debated his options. People were already clearing the area because bad guys on lampposts who attempt to choke out heroes is something you want to avoid getting in the middle of. But some rubberneckers had stopped down the street to gawk. He couldn't let the man get to them but at the same time based on his first attack, Amajiki wasn't fast enough to hit the man. He needed speed, he needed-

Abruptly Amajiki found himself across the street. Midoriya had tackled him out of the way. Where Amajiki had been standing before, there was a knife on a long thin chain embedded in the street. Right. Okay, he'll put that panic attack to the side for now.

"I see he was right about you," the villain grinned. He was now standing where his knife was. He pulled the blade out of the street with an obnoxious amount of ease. "I think such bravery deserves a reward. I'll let you in on a secret."

"You can follow his movements?" Amajiki said lowly. Midoriya gave the smallest nod, eyes hyper-focused on the man. It was like the time he and his class had fought Togata. Amajiki could see the gears turning in his head. He could recognize the intelligence there.

“My name is Godeye,” the man said with a fancy bow. Then he was speeding towards the civilians and Midoriya was on him fingers grazing the cloth of the man’s jacket. He was jumping back just as quickly avoid the knife that came swinging his way. Midoriya underestimated the range the chain gave the man though and front of his costume was cut open and a thin line of blood appeared on his pale skin.

Amajiki focused his attack on the distracted figure and this time managed to graze him but it wasn’t enough. The two heroes fell back into a sort of formation, now standing between the villain and the crowd. Some of the crowd had the sense to start running.

The man appeared a good distance ahead of them, smiling smugly. “And I see all.”

“Deku?” Amajiki said doing his best to keep his eyes on the target.

“I’m fine,” he said, barely glancing at his injury. Amajiki figured if it were deeper his guts would be on the ground but that was too dark of a thought to focus on right now. He didn’t have a lot of options. He‘d hardened his skin to be less cuttable but that made him slower and it took too long to focus his attacks.

Midoriya could follow the guys movement and match his speed.

“Deku.” Amajiki said jaw set with determination.

Midoriya thankfully caught his drift instantly and without so much as a nod he was flying forward at Godeye. Amajiki felt bad about basically throwing the intern at the villain but at the moment it was their best plan.

Midoriya blitzed him with his speed and Amajiki struck at his distracted back. It was too obvious a tactic to last long. The man changed targets intentionally going for Amajiki now, seeing him as the weaker party.

It was a scary moment, the knife only glancing off his skin because of his rock shield and it was an attack that clearly upset Midoriya because the boy sent a debilitating kick into the villains side, green lightning crackling across his skin, eyes blazing.

The villain just grinned despite being winded and in obvious pain. He put some distance between them and coughed.

“Stain, wasn’t wrong about you, Hero Deku,” Godeye grinned dangerously. “I’d like to dance again. Until next time.”

And then the villain flashed away. Frowning Amajiki looked at Midoriya eyebrows raised. Midoriya looked like he was ready to go after the villain, but moments later Fatgum and Kirishima arrived on the scene, concern painting their faces.

Amajiki and Midoriya ended up getting rushed over to a waiting ambulance. Amajiki winced as one of the EMT’s yelled at Midoriya for aggravating a stomach wound. Amajaki had his bruised neck carefully checked, which hurt but was a necessary evil because his throat was pretty freaking important, not just for his quirk but in general.

After a lot of fussing and some reporters, that thankfully Fatgum handled for them. Midoriya regarded the reporters with a nervous smile. Some of them even recognized him and called out his name. It was telling of how much class-a has been through, that a first year was already publicly recognized.

It felt like too long before they got to the office to debrief Fatgum on what happened. By then, Amajiki was exhausted and the painkillers one of the nurses gave him was just starting to kick in. Midoriya was lucid, because of course he was. Maybe he wasn’t injured enough to get the semi-sedative Amajiki got, or maybe he just refused it because he was hardcore as heck.

After going through everything twice and getting the paperwork for the day. They were sent home without much more comment.

The entire train ride back to UA was spent with Amajiki half asleep on Kirishima's shoulder while Midoriya's eyes remained bright and distant.

"So how do you like him!?" Togata said excitedly. He'd always been an eager puppy of a human. On his shoulders sat their unofficially adopted (by law only. She was *family*) little sister, Eri-chan. They were heading to the park. Her eyes were big and eager too, and Amajiki was reminded that Midoriya was just as much her big brother as Togata was. Did that make them brothers too? Step brothers? Brother-in-laws?

"He's cool," Amajiki said in that easy way he only managed around the people he was closest to. Eri counted because she was a shy little thing that deserved the world and he would literally commit murder for her. "Midoriya and I fought a villain together. He could see the villain move when I couldn't. He saved my life."

Eri's eyes lit up with stars and admiration. Togata's expression turned thoughtful. "You didn't have a counter attack for him?"

"Not on me," Amajiki said self-consciously. Guilt over how useless he was once again washing over him. He could have been more clever, he could have don't more, he knew that he shouldn't let himself get into these thoughts spirals about hero work, or it would never end. But he couldn't help but think about how much more capable Midoriya had seemed fighting that villain. He was the senpai, he had more experience, and he did nothing.

"Well, you'll just have to be super prepared in the future," Togata assured him. That was one of the things that helped with his anxiety. Planning ahead rather than dwelling on mistakes he'd made. Fixing things was always easier than actually doing things, if that made sense. Like in the moment Amajiki would make every mistake imaginable, but back tracking and recovering the situation was easier. He could learn from his mistakes.

...unless it involved talking to people? But that didn't really count. Because talking was just a whole different art when it came to fixing problems. No amount of planning could make a talk go the way you want it to or stop you from messing it up. He was getting better, at least he thought he was. But actions would always be easier.

Amajiki just nodded and Eri bounced on Togata's shoulders.

“Did Onii-chan beat the bad guy?” she asked.

Amajiki smiled crookedly. “We didn’t catch him but Midoriya did chase him off.”

“Oh,” Eri seemed to frown but nodded to confirm something to herself. “He’ll get them next time.”

“They probably will,” Togata agreed, reaching up and pulling the girl off his shoulders. Than he swung her around and she gave an excited shout. It was unspeakably adorable.

“Hey,” Amajiki said. “While we’re on the subject of Midoriya, I think you mentioned before that he’s been through several internships. Why so many?”

Togata frowned and put Eri down. “You wanna go play now?” he asked and she nodded and went off towards the swings. Togata shot a smile after her, promising to push her in a moment, and then turned back to Amajiki with a more serious expression. “You already know about what happened to Nighteye. But since then he’s been through three other heroes. The first was the hero Ingenium and he more or less set the tone of Midoriya-kun’s other internships.”

“Ingenium is working again?” Amajiki found himself raising his eyebrows in surprise. He’d heard the hero was paralyzed from the waist down after his fight with the Hero Killer.

Togata nodded, “Someone in his agency's support department made him a pair of robotic pants, from what I hear. He’s trying to take it easy. The robotics are still pretty fickle so he’s only taking on small cases. But that’s the thing. When Midoriya started interning with him, he had a huge spike of criminal activity in his area. The same thing has happened for every hero who’s taken Midoriya on since. People are saying he cursed.”

Amajiki found himself frowning back. “But that’s ridiculous, it’s not his fault the crime rates are going up and increased crime rates or not, it’s still the heroes jobs to catch the villains.

Are you telling me they're dropping him purely because they can't handle the higher workload?"

Togata shrugged and watched as Eri shyly talked to a girl her age by the swing set. Amajiki hoped they'd become friends. Eri deserved all the friends she could get. "That and some think what happened to Nighteye might set a precedence. No one wants what happened to him, to happen to them."

Amajiki scowled slightly, "That wasn't Midoriya's fault."

Togata beamed at him, though Amajiki could see the sadness that had come over him. "I know. That's one of the reasons I think you and Fatgum are a good match for him. You won't judge him for things he can't control."

"No one should," Amajiki said firmly. Looking back at Eri she was beaming now and she and the other girl were now swinging and talking enthusiastically.

"No one should," Togata agreed. They stood in comfortable silence for a while after that. Amajiki's mind went over the information he'd gotten and the fight he'd had the day before. Picking at his sleeve, Amajiki remembered that strange conversation Midoriya had with the villain. It's was hard to remember given he'd been suffocating at the time but it still seemed like the villain had know Midoriya somehow. And Midoriya had mentioned Stain. Given that the villain was a copycat, that wasn't so surprising but it seemed personal.

"Does Midoriya have any connection to the Hero Killer?" he had to wonder.

Togata tilted his head. "You didn't hear? He and a few of his classmates ended up being involved with his capture. You know that video of Stain making that speech that went viral. Midoriya was the kid in it."

Amajiki blinked in surprise. He'd heard about the video but he hadn't bothered watching it. He's never been fond of watching villain's manifestos unless it was directly involved with a case. They tended to make him angry.

He'll have to look into it.

In the business. there was a thing nicknamed 'hero's luck'. It was basically the well established universal rule that your workday never truly ends, even when out of uniform and even after you clock out. Trouble will always find you. The better the hero, the more trouble seems to find you. You can lock yourself in your apartment for hours and there's a strong chance a villain might crash through your front wall. It was just accepted as a thing that happened. In general, it could probably be explained away by how high crime rates are and how many enemies heroes make in general. But it was a rule all the same.

To be honest there were a lot of rules like that..heroes are a superstitious bunch and yet saw the sense in having words for these things. For instance 'the devil's luck' is the nickname for someone who has a lot of near misses. When ruble is falling and a piece barely misses you by a hair, or you get grazed by all the bullets in an automatic weapon. It's a phrase to describe someone who cheats death, often marking someone with the expectation that their luck would run out. Another useful phrase was 'tempting fate'. True it's not terribly new but it was always relevant. There were many taboo phrases throughout the hero community because they tempt fate. Some of them even seem ridiculous if you read them off a list. For instance 'don't make verbal wishes'. You never know who might be waiting around to grant them and it turned out there were a lot of stories behind that one. Even if the 'phrase' had a low statistical chance of happening, no one, absolutely no one ever wanted to tempt fate.

Heroes took their superstitions to various levels of seriousness. But even the most stringent of skeptics, kept to the rules.

Just in case.

It was for all these reasons, Amajiki decided, that he was a certifiable dumbass.

Amajiki was running an errand for his grandmother. She was a seamstress and some fabrics could only be gotten at certain stores that kept ridiculous hours. Amajiki went to pick her order up at roughly eight o'clock on a Sunday night because the store was ridiculous. It was also within Godeye's territory.

Amajiki thought he'd be fine. After all he'd be out of uniform and the killer had no specific reason to target him. And it would seem like too much of a coincidence for the villain to find him in the area twice in two days. He'd be fine.

"Well, well, well," a voice said. Amajiki instantly froze and cussed himself out. Standing in a dark alley beside the store was Godeye leaning against a wall, half in shadow half in the light. Amajiki could see a blue eye glowing in the shadow confirming some witness testimonies. In his hand was a glinting knife, held in the light so it truly sparkled. "Come for a round two?"

Fuck, Amajiki thought trying to shift into his hero mindset as quickly as possible. He shouldn't have tempted fate. He shouldn't have lied to himself. Placing his bag of fabric on the ground he shifted into a fighting stance praying that this time he's be able to keep track of the man.

If anything the man laughed at him. "Way to be boring. We both know I could beat you blindfolded," he laughed like that was a joke and judging by the fact that the blue glowing was coming from under his weird cloth mask, Amajiki figured that it was. "You're just an intern, hardly a challenge for someone with my standards. No… hmmm.... What to do? What to do?"

"I have to arrest you," Amajiki said seriously.

"Boring." Godeye said pointing his knife at him. "I hate being bored. And I hate lame heroes. If you don't shape up then I'm just going to off you to further Deku's story and I'm not ready to play that card yet."

"What do you know about Deku?" Amajiki asked firmly.

Arching his visible eyebrow, Godeye leaned out of the shadows and leered. "A better question is what do you know about Deku? Hmm?"

Amajiki couldn't hide his slight flinch. The man definitely saw it.

“Oh, now that has merit, doesn’t it?” the man said slickly. “How about a mystery? A crime drama and you and Deku are the stars. Not knowing who to trust. Not even being able to trust each other. Now that is juicy!”

“I don’t think so,” Amajiki said moving forward to attack. But the man was gone in a blink.

Right in his ear someone whispered, “You don’t have a choice.”

And then the villain was gone.

Amajiki didn’t sleep well that night.

The problem with villains being vague and creepy instead of outright trying to kill you, is that it is HORRIBLE FOR ANXIETY! Amajiki was already paranoid as a rule. It wasn’t totally irrational most of the time. Knowing so much about crime meant you know patterns, you know what criminals look for. So it’s best to be things villains don’t target. Also being a hero means being a target in general so you have to be extra careful to lessen the likelihood of getting stabbed in the night. Sure, the UA dorms have great security, but Godeye is faster than the normal eye can follow. And also apparently Midoriya isn’t trustworthy and he lives in the dorms so that might be a problem. And also the League of Villains has a guy with a teleportation quirk. Amajiki doesn’t know what’s stopping them from using it to break in again. That is definitely a thing that could be happening any moment now.

Okay, breath.

So basically Amajiki woke up exhausted and still anxious. He could instantly tell that today was going to be a bad day.

The thing with bad days was; on a good day, Amajiki had made considerable progress with his anxiety and could function almost like a normal person. On a bad day, it was like his anxiety dragged his progress into a dark alley and shot it twice in the head and heart making

all the progress seem useless in the end. Sure his progress would return zombie-like from the dead on another good day. But on a bad day, when he really needed it, he was left basically floundering and barely functioning as a human being.

Amajiki hated bad days.

Midoriya, Amajiki notices, was also having a bad day. He too had bags under his eyes and wore an expression of stress. Amajiki did his best to put aside his suspicions about the kid, because obviously he was a good person and Togata trusted him and he was in the hero course and All Might liked him and so on and so forth. But also anxiety. Also general paranoia.

The kid was creepy and there was talk of there being a UA traitor. And the kid seemed to know things that he shouldn't know. He seemed to know how villains thought. And then this new villain shows up and knows who Deku is? Deku just happened to be involved with the original Hero Killer case? Crime rates went up around Deku? It was weird. Not hard evidence but weird.

"Okay," Midoriya said as they gathered around Fatgum's murder board to go over the new evidence they had. Amajiki had reported his encounter with Godeye and they were talking about him possibly targeting two heroes. "Here's what I have on his quirk."

That earned several surprised blinks as Midoriya pulled out a tablet from his backpack. He pulled up an encrypted file before pulling some computer magic (Amajiki was not good with computers) and un-gibberished it. A shockingly thorough analysis of Godeye appeared on screen and was quickly emailed to Fatgums main computer.

"Wow, Deku," Kirishima was the first to recover, "You've upgraded from the notebooks?"

Midoriya blushed and stuttered, "It's um- it's more secure, and I still take notes in my notebooks to just, get my thoughts down. But I- um- I've started using a code, so that the information I write down is less likely to get into villains hands. N-Nedzu recommended it."

“Man, that’s so cool!” Kirishima said enthusiastically. “I forgot you were studying with Nedzu, You’re so smart!”

“Haha… I guess…” Midoriya said modestly.

“You wrote this, Deku?” Fatgum said blinking in surprise as he read over to notes Midoriya sent him. Amajiki shifted uncomfortable, not able to see them all.

“Yes?” he said like it was a question.

“This is good work,” Fatgum nodded, smiling proudly. “If you didn’t have a future in heroics, you’d do well with the police or in analytics.”

“Um… thank you,” Midoriya said blushing hard.

Fatgum smile encouragingly, “Would you like to explain your findings?”

“Oh! Um… okay… so basically there are several relevant theories to his quirk but based on the evidence, I think it might be some kind of present time sense. Like he named himself Godeye and he’s established to have a glowing eye-patch and a talent for tracking heroes, specifically when they enter his territory. My guess is that he can see anything with in the drawn territory. Most of the other qualities he’s exhibited can be explained away by thorough training. If he has some sort of present vision that would also explain why he knows when to run and escape. He would also know an environment better than anyone else. He’d also be more capable of manipulating people’s blind-spots. It also would explain how strict his territory seems to be. If he only attacks people he sees enter his territory then those fights would rarely venture out of the territory. It would also explain why he would be aware when a hero enters his territory. It explains how he was able to find me and Suneater-senpai so quickly. It also would explain why there was initially significantly more villain deaths in the area at the beginning of his spree. He would be able to see villain attacks when they happen and head it off right away. The only reason the villain deaths have gone down is that the more organized groups realized it wasn’t safe to do business in the area, and also… I mean, a significant number of them are dead now…”

“That’s…” Amajiki said unable to stop staring. His brain was really tired, okay. “That’s really specific. You got all of this from one fight with the guy?”

“And the files Fatgum and the police provided,” Midoriya said gesturing at the murder board. “It’s still a theory though, I have a few others on what it could be, but going by the evidence this is the most likely option I think. To truly know we would have to test the parameters of his quirk further, but obviously that’s really dangerous…” he trailed off into a mumbling rant that Amajiki’s ears only caught every other word of.

It was unsettling nonetheless.

See, this wasn’t good for Amajiki’s already frazzled nerves. He hated not knowing what people were saying. He hated how smart Midoriya was, how knowing. Amajiki would bet that Midoriya knew all of his weaknesses just from the short time they’ve been together. He probably knew a lot of heroes weakness. Oh god HE KNEW EVERYONE’S WEAKNESSES!

“Senpai?” Kirishima said, in a way that implied he’d said it several times and Amajiki was totally zoning out. Oh man, that was so embarrassing. He one hundred percent blamed it on the anxiety. It was always the anxiety’s fault. Was there actually any doubt? He needed a nap.

“Senpai?” Midoriya was the one speaking now. Amajiki blinked and looked around finding that the room was now empty of everyone but him and Midoriya.

“Uh…” Amajiki said intelligently.

“We have rounds to make.” Midoriya said helpfully.

“Oh. Right. Yeah. Work.”

“Are you okay, senpai?” Midoriya asked kindly. Oh god, he was so nice. How could Amajiki ever doubt this nice boy? He felt like crying.

Instead he let out an ungodly awkward laugh. Midoriya flinched startled and Amajiki's just inwardly cringed. Someone needed to kill him now. Rescue him from his disaster of a life and free him from this mortal coil. Send him into the void.

"God, same." Midoriya said.

OH GOD HE SAID THAT OUT LOUD! Bad sleepy brain! Bad! Bad!

"Senpai, we still have to go to do rounds, do you want to go stop in the infirmary? I could see if I could work with one of the older sidekicks instead." Midoriya offered.

"No, no, I'm fine," Amajiki said, lacking confidence in the lie. "Let's go."

This wouldn't be the first or last bad day. It would be fine.

"Did you see that?" Amajiki asked. He could of sworn he'd seen the villain out of the corner of his eye. This had to be paranoia, right?. Please, tell him it was just paranoia. He was just saying things because he was crazy, not because they were being followed already.

"No?" Midoriya said, following Amajiki's eyeline, seeing nothing.

Okay this might be bad. Midoriya was supposed to be able to follow the guy, so the fact that he couldn't see it, was probably a bad sign.

"There it is again," Amajiki said, seeing the guy flash to another light pole. He smiled and bowed and disappeared again. Okay fuck this. Fuck Amajiki's brain. 'It would be fine' is gonna be struck from his phrases to use list. It's the tiredness. Normally he wouldn't think something was going to be fine. He definitely knew better. But here he was using cursed phrases and regretting it.

Midoriya turned too late to see the villain. “What are you talking about, senpai?”

“Come on,” Amajiki said, hating himself. But his instincts were screaming to head towards what he was seeing. It was…okay, he might be crazy but what if he wasn’t crazy? What if it was something and he was just doubting himself because he was tired. What if ignoring it was the mistake?

Midoriya seemed to trust him because he followed him down the street. Amajiki’s cape flowed in the wind behind him making the entire situation feel more dramatic. He pointed up at the corner of a building. “He was right there. I swear he was up there.”

“Senpai…” and Midoriya’s voice cracked badly. Amajiki turned back towards him and found Midoriya wasn’t staring up at the building but down the alley at the buildings side. All the blood had drained from his face.

Amajiki followed his eyes and his heart thudded in his chest.

It was a body.

It was a dead body, missing its eyes and covered and blood. He must have been a teenager, someone Amajiki’s age. With dark blue hair and freckles and who knows what quirk. And now he was dead. The smell hit suddenly and hard, all at once, too sweet and sickly, and mealy almost like infection and feces.

Feeling utterly sick, Amajiki pulled the younger boy back. “Don’t look, Deku.” he commanded. The boy was breathing harshly and his eyes were impossibly wide. “It’s okay, just breathe.”

“H-he l-looks l-like us,” Midoriya said in a daze.

“What?” Amajiki said not wanted to process that information.

Midoriya looked at him with shiny blank eyes. “He l-looks l-like us…”

“Okay,” Amajiki said, putting aside his problems with physical contact to hug the boy. It was what he needed, even so he gently moved them off to the side so that the body was out of sight.. “Okay, just breathe, Deku. Is this your first body?”

“N-Nighteye…” Midoriya murmured. Fuck.

“O-okay,” Amajiki said rubbing the boys back. “It’s okay. You’re safe. Everything is going to be okay. I just need to make a call. Just sit here and don’t move, okay? Everything is going to be okay.”

Amajiki felt sick but unfortunately this wasn’t the first body he’s found. It probably wouldn’t be the last. But he never wanted to be used to it. He made the call to Fatgum and the local detectives, stomach twisting as he explained the situation. He tried to calm himself even as his mind refused to process the full situation in front of him.

His eyes trailed back to the ally.

An alley that Midoriya was back to standing in front of. “Midoriya!”

Midoriya didn’t flinch, eyes glued on the body, still taking in all the details as tears streamed down his cheeks. He looked disgusted, one of his hands grabbed onto his other arm so hard that his knuckles were white. Only his eyes moved feeding on every detail on of the scene, with an almost sick hunger.

“Deku,” Amajiki said pulling the boy back. Midoriya seemed barely aware of the motions, eyes still locked on the murder scene. “Deku, I told you not to look.”

“He has the same wounds as us,” Midoriya whispered, intensely, hand going over his stomach. Amajiki couldn’t help it. He looked back at the body and saw the mirrored throat bruises and a slash across the stomach. There was a sudden roaring in his ears. “Senpai… Suneater, I think this is targeted at us…”

“Okay-” Amajiki forced himself to breathe. He needed to think clearly. He needed to control the situation. “Okay, Mi- Deku, whatever you say. Just- just don't look at the body anymore. The police are on their way and they’ll handle things. Okay. just let them do their jobs and then we can go home.”

“B-but I have to help with the case?” Midoriya said looking genuinely confused and out of it.

“No, you don’t,” Amajiki said,in what he hoped was a soothing voice. “Just let the detectives do their work and everything will be okay. Okay?”

“He looks like us…” blue hair, freckles, short, skinny, Amajiki’s age. Midoriya wasn’t wrong but they couldn’t focus on that right now.

“Deku, just focus on me, okay?” Amajiki said, kneeling slightly so they were eye level. “Just focus on me. This isn’t your fault. There was nothing we could have done to stop it. Okay? So, breathe with me. Okay?”

Midoriya buried his face in Amajiki’s shoulders and sobbed. Amajiki held him firmly, disgusted with the crime and the criminal and horrified that Midoriya had to face this situation so soon. Amajiki didn’t see his first body until late in his second year. This was already Midoriya’s second.

A distance away, Amijaki thought he saw Godeye standing on a rooftop knife still glinting in his hand. But he was gone in an instant. Shit.

The time that it took to get home after that was too long. At least they were sent home-home, no just back to the dorms. Their parents had to pick them up from the police station. Amajiki felt a little jealous of Midoriya’s relationship with his mother when she showed up and took

over comforting her son. He knew his step dad wouldn't be nearly as supportive whenever he showed up. It was good to know Midoriya had people supporting him.

As per national policy he and Midoriya would have a few weeks off to get their shit together, after the trauma. They were even given a few days off school, which Amajiki appreciated, and access to the agency's psychologist as well as the school psychologist. Amajiki was pretty sure that once they were getting paid, they'd be given paid leave.

Amajiki, honestly used the break to catch up on some homework and much needed sleep. He was still having nightmares, of course. Being targeted by a serial killer would do that to you. Also seeing a body that kinda looked like you would do that to you.

The psychologist could only do so much, given that there wasn't any action they could take to fix the problem. Talking helped. But Amajiki's mind never did him any favors so he was still having problems.

Thankfully, Togata kept dropping in and he was a great comfort. When Amajiki returned to the dorms Togata even spent the nights in his dorm room. Like a sleepover. It was like when they were kids. Amajiki imagined they'd still do this as grown ups, anytime something bad happened to one of them. Amajiki hoped so.

When he returned to the dorms, he also checked on Midoriya, who still looked peeky from the experience. Amajiki didn't blame him. When he'd seen his first body he was in a ten times worse state. If anything it was impressive how well Midoriya was holding up.

That day, when they normally would have been heading out to work, Amajiki met up with Midoriya. Most of their classmates would either be working at their own internships, or doing other training, so the campus was pretty empty except for them and some of the kids from general studies. Even the support and business course kids had internships.

Midoriya, of course, was looking slightly lost when Amajiki walked up to him. It was probably a bad thing that he felt closer to the boy after their shared trauma, but that was just how it was sometimes. He felt closer to Kirishima after their first battle together, too. Amajiki was beginning to suspect that this was the only way he could make friends was by almost dying with someone. The only real exception was Togata, who had just walked up to him and

befriended him. Amajiki was pretty sure that was just a unique talent Togata had and it wasn't indicative of his entire friend-making experience.

"Hey, Midoriya," Amajiki said. "How are you feeling?"

Midoriya laughed brittlely and rubbed one of his eyes. "I'm fine. Just tired I guess. I'll feel better once we get back to work."

"...work?" Amajiki asked frowning. "If I were you, work would be the furthest thing from my mind. Are you sure you're okay?"

"Yeah, of course, senpai," Midoriya said in a wobbly kind of way. "I just need to start in on the case and I'll feel better. The sooner we solve the case the sooner we bring justice to the victim."

Amajiki shifted slightly hand messing with the edge of his sleeve. "Midoriya, the people who solve crimes is the detectives. We just fight the villains when necessary. It's not our job to solve the murder… I mean we already know who did it pretty much."

"That doesn't mean we can't be doing more," Midoriya said. Amajiki stared at him, mouth slightly open. He took note of the bags under his eyes and how greasy his hair was.

"Midoriya, when was the last time you took a break?" Amajiki asked, an unsettling picture forming in his head.

Midoriya gazed innocently up at him. "Two days ago?"

"Just the day after the find? What about yesterday? Or the day before that?"

"I had a lot of homework to catch up on and training, I'm pretty busy, eheheh…" Midoriya was starting to look uncomfortable at this line of question. Even though Amajiki had done the

same thing he had a bad feeling that statement meant something very different to Midoriya.

“Okay when was your last break before that?”

There was a long silence. Midoriya seemed to consider his answer for a long time then he said “...um…”

“You don’t remember?” Amajiki gasped, feeling very concerned now.

“It’s fine!” Midoriya said waving his hands wildly. “It’s fine, I just have a lot of work to do. I’ve got my regular classes, the work Nedzu gives me, then I have a college course I’m taking to get a P.I. license in conjunction with my hero license. And I have to train to maintain my muscle mass, plus the internship itself and my extra analysis to help with that. I can’t afford to take a break.”

Amajiki stared at the boy, mouth open, a lot of things about the boy adding up. No wonder he seemed so talented and ahead of the curb. He was literally *insane* . “You’re gonna burn yourself out.” It was more a statement, not a question. It did nothing to conceal the deep concern and protectiveness that was suddenly overwhelming Amajiki.

Midoriya ran a hand through his thick green curls, looking distressed at how distressed Amajiki was. “If I slow down, I’ll fall behind. Everything I do is to help people so, that’s more important. I can’t afford to stop or someone will get hurt.”

Amajiki found himself frowning sternly. He got it. That was the annoying part. He got it perfectly because it was a lesson he had to learn multiple time. “Midoriya, if you carry on like this, you’re going to hurt yourself beyond repair. I mean you already have. You could die...”

Midoriya shrugged, eyes focused elsewhere, as though he wasn’t really listening to him, as though he’d had this conversation before. “I’m not the one who matters.”

And Amajiki felt as though he'd been slapped. He felt an unexpected wave of anger rush through him, "What are you stupid!?" the normally shy boy shouted. "Of course you matter! Everyone matters. How do you expect be a hero if you're dead, huh? You have all these friends and people rooting for you and yet you think you don't matter? You matter to them! You matter to me, Togata and Eri! You matter to Kirishima and Fatgum, now! You obviously matter to All Might! Does that mean nothing to you?"

"Of course it matters-" Midoriya's voice broke.

"Then act like it!" Amajiki shouted. "If you destroy yourself, you're hurting more people than you're helping. Support goes both way and I think it's pretty arrogant of you to assume that you matter so little that no one would care if you hurt yourself. I mean-" Amajiki pulled at his hair. How many times has he had to go through this lesson? How many times would he have broken down if not for the support of Tagata and Nejire-chan? Too many times to count and he would never take there support for granted. So how could some like Midoriya do such a thing. "I mean- just look at your hands. You haven't even become a hero yet and they're already mangled. And just- you've been with the Fatgum agency for barely a week and you've already been injured a few times! And you don't sleep? And you think you can be a hero acting like *this* ? You think you're going to live long enough to become a hero if you treat yourself like this?"

"It's not like that!" Midoriya shouted back, and he was crying. Oh god, Amajiki made someone cry. "It's not like I'm trying to get hurt all the time. It's not like I want to hurt the people I care about. There's just more important things than me. There's always been and I'm always going to put them first."

Amajiki fumed for a moment, a conflict of emotions warring within him. The guilt of hurting someone's feelings against the frustration that someone could be this dense. "You're acting selfish."

That seemed to catch Midoriya off guard. "Huh?"

"It selfish to treat yourself like shit when so many people care about you," Amajiki said firmly. His skin was beginning to itch with anxiety but he stood his ground. "When you hurt yourself, you're not the only one you're hurting. Do you not understand how terrifying it is to watch someone destroy themselves?"

Midoriya's eyebrows drew together and he looked down at his hand, the one missing a finger. For some reason his other hand fell to a place on his chest, just below his heart. His entire expression remained pensive for a long moment as he seemed to go over evidence in his head and finally he slumped and said. "You're right."

"Of course, I'm right," Amajiki said. He almost laughed in relief. But now was not the time for that. "Just set some limits, okay? There's a difference between going beyond and running yourself into the ground. Put your own health first sometimes."

"...yes, senpai."

"Now," he said, starting to lose confidence. "What do you like to do for fun?"

Midoriya shifted suddenly looking much shyer. "Um… I guess I used to play video games a lot. I was third in the district at Lords of Lore before I started focusing more on training."

"Lords of Lore?" Amajiki questioned. He'd heard of the game, he'd even been told that he looks like a character, but he'd definitely never played it and he didn't know what it was about.

"It's an MMO," Midoriya supplied. "You play as fairy tale characters mostly. The whole thing pulls from a lot of different countries folklore, it's kinda neat."

"Third in the district is pretty impressive," Amajiki commented.

Midoriya smiled bashfully. "I guess, it's not like I'm third in the nation or the world or anything."

"It's still impressive," Amajiki said. He wondered if he was doing this right but he couldn't bring himself to regret yelling. "Hey… do you wanna go to the arcade or something?"

“The arcade?” Midoriya blinked up at him. “Are you sure that’s okay?”

“Yeah,” Amajiki nodded coming to a decision. “It’ll be fun, I’ll even pay.”

This kid needed more of a childhood, and Amajiki was willing to give it to him by force if necessary. Midoriya smiled shakily.

“I couldn’t ask you to-” he said, politely.

“I want to,” Amajiki insisted. Midoriya blushed.

“Um… yeah, okay. Thank you, senpai.” Midoriya bowed and it was kinda embarrassing for both of them. But Amajiki was kinda grateful that some of the tension between them had finally eased.

And hour later, pocket lighter and having just been thoroughly thrashed at DDR Amajiki still couldn’t bring himself to regret it. Especially when Midoriya smiled up at him at a point and said, “You know, senpai, you’re really cool.”

Amajiki couldn’t help but smile back.

“There’s been another victim,” Fatgum said when they entered. A detective was with him and the three students shared looks of concern.

“What have we learned?” Midoriya asked, eyes narrowing with concern. That was a strange question to be his first but was efficient as far as the work went.

The detective cleared his throat and stepped forward. “The victim was a boy named Kimijima Kino.” Amajiki felt the blood drain from his face. “Eighteen years old. Same MO as the last cases except-”

“I know him,” Amajiki gasped when the words had started to process. “I- um- I knew him. I went to middle school with him- he was- h-he was…” Amajiki trailed off feeling all eyes on him. He flushed guiltily. The boy had been a bully. One of his bullies.

The detective regarded him. “That’s very serious. When we’re finished here, I would like to interview you for any additional information you have.”

Amajiki nodded, feeling somewhat faint. Someone he knew had been targeted? That couldn’t be a coincidence. Oh god, was this his fault?

“As I was saying,” the detective continued. “We have reason to believe, more reason now, that this villain, Godeye, is targeting you two specifically.”

Midoriya drew a sharp breath. Amajiki felt sick. This wasn’t good for his health, this wasn’t good for his anxiety, this wasn’t good for anything. Oh no. Oh god this killer was going on a killing spree. What if he killed more people that Amajiki knew, like his parents or his brother or Togata? Or just one of his neighbors? Oh god this was so bad and it would be his fault too because he didn’t catch the guy his first fight. Oh god. Oh no. This was bad…

“He left a letter,” the detective went on, heedless to Amajiki’s and Midoriya’s inner turmoil. “Addressed specifically to you, Deku. It said some very concerning things about both of you, and it seems that’s he’s come to fixate on you after your fight. If possible we’d like you to read it and provide further information on that as well. But as of this moment, since you are both underaged and the danger he poses, the Skywaka Police District and the Fatgum Office have agreed that it’s best to remove you from the case for your own safety. We also request you avoid his territory at all cost until further notice.”

Midoriya started to protest, ever the workaholic. But getting a look from Amajiki, he hesitated then backed down. Setting his limits. With a bit more talking and eventually going to give their inteviews, Fatgum moved them onto the the next cases they’d be working.

It was a while before he found himself alone with Midoriya again once the day got started. But when he did he noticed the boy's troubled expression.

"What are you thinking?" he asked.

Midoriya frowned and looked at him with his large green eyes. "I don't think it will be as easy as taking us off the case. I don't think he'll stop just because we don't enter his territory."

Amajiki bit the inside of his cheek, anxiety prickling up his skin. If they were talking to Amajiki's therapist, the two of them would be called paranoid, but Amajiki had to agree. "But what can we do? He'd have to break out of his territory to hunt us. Do you think he'd do that, as set in his pattern as he is?"

"I don't know," Midoriya said, tense. "There's a chance… and this is purely speculation. But I think his vision is limited by some kind of markers, that's why it's shaped the way it is. He was the one who shaped it."

Amajiki caught on, "And if that's the case… then there's a chance he could move those markers somewhere else…."

Midoriya nodded, "Around the school even."

"In which case the villains will have a very powerful spy," Amajiki felt chilled.

Midoriya nodded again. "With luck," he said wearily, as though he doubted his luck. "Since he's Stain's protege he won't be inclined to join the League of Villains. But any other group that picks him up will have a huge advantage on us. And I'd really, really hate to see this guy's quirk combined with Kurogiri's if worse does come to worse."

Amajiki sighed knowing that this bad business would be sticking to him like tar for a while. "Well, we can only hope that it doesn't come to that."

Midoriya smiled weakly, “We can only hope…”

Chapter End Notes

This chapter fought me so hard while making it, I’m too tired to edit properly, but hopefully the length makes up for it

how to make a villain;
-watch Blood Blockade Battlefront and Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire in the same day. Decide to give the guy magic eyes
-take inspiration from a Danny Phantom fanfiction you read a couple of months ago
-give him a Phantom of the Opera mask and a dumb cape
-have him stand on a lamp post and realize that he's kinda like Tuxedo Mask
-lean into the Tuxedo Mask thing. Let him have that ‘trying too hard to be cool’ vibe
-accidentally make him cool
-realize your design kinda looks like some human Bill Cypher designs
-hate yourself
-Profit???

Chapter: establishes a new villain oc, talks a lot about social anxiety, has Midoriya discover his first official dead body, builds a good relationship between good boys, starts the resolution of the character arc Midoriya’s had of not caring for himself enough. Is long as hell in general.

What my audience cares about the most: ERI SHOWED UP AND SHE MAD A FRIEND!

Anyway, with this chapter we’ve reached 100,000 words and we’ve hit 100,000 hits, so I’m going to do an art giveaway. Post requests down in the comments and i’ll draw three lucky commentators suggestions!

Discord:
https://discord.gg/SEkN8ee
Tumblr:
https://amarelibertius.tumblr.com

4 am

Chapter by serenawitchwriter

Chapter Summary

Kaminari discovers Midoriya has nightmares

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Kaminari likes Midoriya.

Kaminari feels like they have a broship, a silent friendship based on a understanding. They were both members of the ‘my quirk will eventually leave me permanently disabled or kill me’ club. It wasn’t a good club to be in. It was actually pretty freaking dark stuff to live with but that’s why the broship worked, right?

Most people didn’t get it. Bakugou might have wrist pain and Uraraka might throw up but their quirks weren’t slowly killing them.

Midoriya was eventually going to break himself beyond repair. He would probably be out of the hero game by thirty the way he was pushing himself. Heck, Kaminari wouldn’t be surprised if that boy just keep going until he died in battle or something. It would royally suck, but that was the kinda dude Midoriya was. If he didn’t die young, than he was going to grow up to be crippled. Kaminari didn’t envy how much his bones must hurts when it rains. Midoriya drank all the bone hurting juice. All of it.

And Kaminari, well, let’s just say most four-year olds aren’t ready to hear the words ‘can cause permanent brain damage’ when they get their quirk. It was kinda the worst thing to ever happen to him. His parents were really upset and blamed themselves. He was pretty much told to avoid using his quirk at all which is kinda like being told to keep one eye closed for as long as possible. That didn’t pan out, especially because little Denki was even more hyper and easily distracted then he is now. His parents, to this day, panic almost every time he uses his quirk. It’s kinda sad. One of his goals in becoming a hero was to prove to them

that he's okay, that his quirk isn't holding him back. He was going to be an awesome cool hero even with his broken quirk and he's going to make them proud!

But still, shit's scary sometimes.

The worst thing was when his memory acted up. He wasn't the smartest cookie to begin with but sometimes it was like his brain was reaching for a memory and the memory just wasn't there anymore. Like walking into a room and forgetting why you did that, or walking up stairs in the dark and missing a step. Those moments made him feel crazier and stupider than anything else. It was like there was all this empty space in his brain and where there's supposed to be stuff, you know? It bugged him.

But there wasn't anything he could do about it. There never was and if he was gonna move forward at all, he just had to keep going. Go with the flow. Keep smiling. That was probably why he never mentioned the whole inevitable vegetable thing. People get weird when they find out. They start treating him like he's a baby that needs a hundred blankets and they get really *really* scared for him. He figured the whole 'my power fries my brain' thing, would make the whole 'danger' thing obvious but *shrug* if you don't make a big deal about it no one else makes a big deal about it (except Recovery Girl but she doesn't count because she *knows*). He likes it better that way. He rather people smile and have fun with him then feel bad and sad about his janky quirk.

He might be dumb but that wasn't going to stop him from being a good friend and a good dude! He was going to be the best dude no matter how bad his brain got! That was all that mattered in the end! He'd save the day and be the coolest hero out there!

Where was he again?

Oh yeah! So Kaminari liked Midoriya but right now he was being super freaking creepy.

It was a little before four am, the class was on another retreat (which seemed like a bad idea considering they were attacked every time the class went off campus but meh, that was the teachers problem. 1-a could take care of themselves and like the amount of pros with them right now was ridiculous.

Anyway, Kaminari ended up with his sleeping mat by Midoriya's for a change. Usually the arrangement was either alphabetical or by friend group and to be fair Todoroki was sleeping on Midoriya's other side and Kirishima was on Kaminari's other side. But Iida had decided to sleep by the door and Shinsou (who was still awake somehow) was trying to sleep by him. So that left one of Midoria's sides totally open and Kaminari was the one to get it. There was a whole weird argument about sleeping arrangements when they set out the mats because Bakugou really loudly refused to sleep by Deku and no one was even going to make him do it until he refused. Kaminari and Kirishima teased him about it until he got really mad and loud and Aizawa settled it by making Kaminari take the mat.

Everyone slept differently. Midoriya was a restless sleeper and so was Kirishima so a rough kick to the spleen woke Kaminari up at three am and he wasn't sure who did it but it was probably Kirishima.

Because Midoriya had his eyes wide open and was staring right at Kaminari. His breathing was heavy, too, but he seemed frozen in place. When Kaminari tried to whisper to him or move his hand in front of his eyes he didn't react so Kaminari was pretty sure he was still sleeping.

Meaning he was sleeping with his eyes open. Which was kinda cool, but also must hurt. Didn't that cause dry eye or something? Kaminari was pretty sure Aizawa wasn't willing to share his eye drops.

But yeah, now Kaminari couldn't get back to sleep. Midoriya was just staring at him and it was creepy. Midoriya also started twitching which was creepy. It was almost like he was possessed.

Some time went by and Kaminari ended up trying to make eye contact with Shinsou who was playing a game on his phone. All he got from that exchanged was a raised eyebrow before Shinsou returned to staring at his phone. Cold-blooded. He probably couldn't see Midoriya from his position.

Midoriya made a weird little unsteady breathing noise. Denki was now seriously debating just waking Midoriya up.

Kirishima kicked him again and Kaminari instead ended up glaring at him instead.

Whelp, fortune favors the reckless (that's the phrase right?). "Midoriya," Kaminari whispered shaking the kid. "Midoriya?"

The effect was more immediate than Kaminari expected. Midoriya was awake and on his feet scarily fast. He had his fist raised and he was staring around instantly on alert for enemies. Kaminari wasn't expecting that. Most of the time, when he fell asleep in the dorm he was pretty chill when he woke up from his naps. Maybe it was because he was having a nightmare? They all had nightmares after all and in Kaminari's experience they were more likely to happen at night in private for some reason.

"Hey, bro, it's okay," Kaminari whispered looking around to see if they had woken anyone else awake. Todoroki briefly opened his eyes to glare at them, he's always been a light sleeper, but her fell almost instantly back to sleep looking surlier than before. Shinsou was sitting up, too, looking unsure about what was happening. "It was just a nightmare," Kaminari whispered. "You're safe."

Midoriya froze for a moment, processing the information, then his shoulders slumped slightly and he suddenly looked nauseous. Next moment he was running from the room hands clasped over his mouth in the tell tale 'I'm gonna puke' look.

Shinsou and Kaminari exchanged looks again, and then both quietly got up to follow him.

Shinsou was another person Kaminari liked.

His quirk was cool and he worked super hard in general to joined their class. He was also as fluent in memes as Kaminari, so when they exchanged number a while back there chat became essentially escalating the surrealism that is meme culture. Kaminari knew for a fact that anyone looking at their array of pictures and jokes that made up there conversations would see was pure gibberish. Like Mina stole his phone once and saw them exchanging Thomas the Train Engine self-insert characters for a Hunger Games au they were putting together and she promptly never stole his phone again.

Sero had also adopted Shinsou, because they both liked spooky things and dumb pranks. Which, one, unofficially made Shinsou their adopted son and unofficially meant Kaminari

and Sero were married now. And two, meant Shinsou was now an unofficial member of the Bakusquad. Really the only reason it was unofficial was that Shinsou had chosen to become a member of the Dekusquad and he very openly loathed Bakugou.

Which was ironic because Bakugou actually liked him, at least as much as someone like Bakugou was capable of liking anyone. Bakugou had this whole weird thing about how people should never hesitate in their goals. Shinsou had proven in his entire battle to get into 1-a that he wasn't going to hesitate or hold back, ever. That went a long way in Sparky Sparky Boom Man Land.

Shinsou was also one of the few people who didn't hesitate to cuss Blasty out right back. They'd had some pretty funny fights (made funnier by Bakugou trying to use his quirk to seem intimidating and failing because of his punishment handcuffs). They rivaled Midoriya's and Bakugou's Legendary Swear Off from earlier in the year. They were all artists.

The squad lines didn't really matter anyway because cross group friendships weren't that big of a deal. Kirishima platonically loved Midoriya. Mina, Tsuyu, and Uraraka were attached at the hips sometimes. Kirishima, Uraraka, Midoriya and Bakugou had a total gym rat rivalry thing going on. And even Iida and Sero had a weird thing where they talked about car (and leg?) engines. The only real thing that mattered was who's side you took on game night.

The game night divide could make and break friendships and unfortunately Shinsou consistently sided with the Dekusquad, so his true adoption into the Bakusquad would never come to pass.

"Kaminari, wake up," Shinsou all but growled. Kaminari startled and blinked sleepily out in the long hallway that they were moving through. The retreat was in a pretty big training ground. It was like for monks or something. Oh right they were do shit. He kinda just got caught up looking at Shinosu and than oop, brain tangent. Always an adventure.

"Kaminari," Shinsou said shaking him again. Kaminari blushed a bit and woke up enough to continue look for Midoriya.

They found him in the bathroom of course, vomiting loudly enough that Kaminari worried that puke was coming out his nose. Kaminari hated those kinda pukes. Kaminari knocked on the door, and Midoriya understandably didn't really respond.

“Midoriya,” Shinsou called, voice all husky from sleep deprivation.

It took a long moment for Midoriya to catch his breath enough to reply.

“Don’t worry, I’m fine,” Midoriya said, in a thick voice. The ‘I just puked, my sinuses hate me, and I might cry’ voice. “It’s dumb. Just go back to bed. I’m not even sick.”

“That sounded sick.” Shinsou said in a tone that allowed no argument.

Midoriya sniffed miserably. “It’s dumb.” and Kaminari could just tell he was pouting up a storm even though the bathroom door.

“Can we come in?” Kaminari asked, mind doing the easily distracted jump again.

Midoriya hesitated. The bathroom was quiet for an eerily silent moment. Then they heard the lock being undone and the door swung open.

Midoriya looked like shit. He hadn’t even gotten off the floor to unlock the door, and we was just slumped on the floor looking small and pale and miserable. He definitely needed a hug.

So Kaminari knelt down and hugged him. He was usually more hesitant with personal contact, because he’s accidentally discharged during a hugs before, and no that’s not a euphemism for anything. But hey he was tired and he valued hugging his friends over dumb quirk risks.

Midoriya smelled like puke but he was warm and he pretty much immediately burst into tears.

“It’s dumb,” he repeated.

Kaminari rubs Midoriya's back, having done this an alarming number of times before. Now that he thinks about it, the Bakusquad has had a lot of bathroom meltdowns. The only one he hasn't rubbed to back of was Bakugou and that was because the sparky bitch was too proud to break down and puke/cry in the bathroom. Somehow Kaminari kept being the comforter in those situations. He figured it was the least he could do, his friends looked after him all the time when he gets dopey.

"If it's making you miserable it's not dumb," Shinsou said gravelly. He stood off the the did, the bathroom stall too small for him to enter. "We've talked about this, Midoriya, you don't have to pretend to be fine anymore."

Midoriya pouted and Kaminari knew he'd missed a private conversation between these too. He wasn't going to but into that though. He wasn't as close to them as he was some of his other classmates, so even though he definitely cared he wasn't going to be nosey.

"It was just a nightmare…" Midoriya mumbled.

"Ah, mood," Kaminari said automatically. That earned him two startled looks which made him feel slightly self-conscious. "What? We all have nightmares right? It's just a thing with being a hero. Plus Midoriya, you like live through hell every couple of days and have obvious chronic pain, so like of course you'd have nightmares… right?"

"...my chronic pain is obvious?" he asked in a small voice.

"Not to me?" Shinsou said a slightly puzzled expression on his face. "I mean it makes sense. But it's not obvious."

Kaminari laughed, good-naturedly. "Yeah, it's just a takes-one-to-know-one thing. Don't worry about it. Anyway, Midoriya, nightmares aren't dumb. You shouldn't beat yourself over having them."

Kaminari could practically see Midoriya catch the angst scent. He was doing the classic Midoriya move of ‘why worry about myself when I can worry about you’. It was concerning but also kinda nice sometimes? It was one of the things that just made you want to cuddle the kid until the stupid self-worth problems were suffocated right out of his body. That sounded bad… um…

“What do you mean you have chronic pain, Kaminari?” Midoriya asked looking at him with his big puppy dogs eyes. They were impossible to fight. Impossible to lie to.

“I- hehe- i just get really bad migraines sometimes,” Kaminari said nervously. “It’s not a big deal. I’m used to them.”

“Used to them enough that you define them as ‘chronic pain’?” Shinsou asked grimly. His look of detached disapproval was almost as bad as Midoriya’s puppy eyes. He almost looked like Aizawa. It was scary.

“You never said anything,” Midoriya frowned. This was unfair. Did everyone close to Midoriya have to put up with his concerned pouts? How do they survive? It’s too cute. It’s too innocent. This is why Kaminari can’t be in the Dekusquad.

Kaminari looked at Shinsou for help. Nope, still Aizawa-faced. Shit. He needed a joke.

“Uh-um- uh, pfft, brains, right?” Kaminari said effectively. Maybe that was dumb enough to get a laugh?

No?

Not even a snort?

Tough crowd…

Kaminari smiled anyway. “Really, it’s fine, it’s just a quirk thing. You got your Bonecrusher the Undying thing and Shinsou’s got his Sleepycat thing. I just got a Bad Brain Rising… thing. It’s not a big deal.”

“Does Aizawa know you get headaches?” Shinsou asked, flatly.

“I mean… probably?” Kaminari shrugged. Did he know? It was too early to be sure of things like that.

Shinsou just gave him a concerned frown. Midoriya continued to pout and Kaminari ended up hugging him again. “Hey, it’s fine,” he reassured. “It’s not as bad as shattering my bones every couple of days, so i’d say i’m golden.”

“I’m not breaking my bones anymore!”

“You both need serious psychological help.”

“Bold of you to assume I’m not getting it,” Kaminari arched an eyebrow, the attempt not really working on his face and making him look doofey. Shinsou snorted.

“Oh, I’m glad you’re getting help,” Midoriya said genuinely. “Are you seeing one of the school counselors?”

“Well sometimes for those mandated ones,” Kaminari said easily. “but i had one before i came to UA, too, and I spend way more time with them. They’ve helped me loads with my ADHD too. Doctor Tomako is great.”

Shinsou slid to the floor so he was level with them. Now they were all just hanging out on the hopefully clean bathroom floor like a bunch of dorks. “You don’t seem like the type,” Shinsou commented.

Kaminari tilted his head. “Type?”

“To need a psychologist,” Shinsou said looking almost guilty.

Kaminari grinned. “That just means it’s working,” he winked.

Shinsou got that puzzled/suspicious look he always got when he wasn’t sure someone was making fun of him or not. Just goes to show that they’ve all had very bullying experiences, because Kaminari almost always knew when someone was making fun of him. Mostly because they’d do it right in front of him. Maybe it was because he knew how to laugh at himself? It’s weird how your reaction affects how people treat you. Kaminari’s ribbings were a lot more good-natured and casually, because Kaminari knew how to rib back and didn’t really let it affect him. Someone like Midoriya who went all tiny, became an obvious and easy target for violence because people knew he was going to do much back (until he does and then LOOK OUT. he’s CRAZY!). Shinsou reacted angrily and bitterly and people, from what Kaminari could tell, were more distant with him. He was scary enough that people didn’t insult him to his fate, but did say a lot of stuff behind his back.

Kaminari liked his method best. Once you got over the hurtful stuff, being a joke was kinda fun. Everyone loves a comedian.

“Anyway, green-sheep,” Kaminari changed the subject. “What nightmare got you bad enough that you’re puking?”

Midoriya immediately looked away and mumbled some gibberish.

Kaminari nodded sagely. “That sucks.”

Shinsou looked at him. “You understood that?”

“On a spiritual level.” Kaminari nodded. “Mental level not as much.”

Shinsou rolled his eyes and Midoriya looked embarrassed for some reason. Kaminari didn't really get why, he wasn't the one who made the bad joke.

"I… sorry…" Midoriya said softly. "Just… um… recently during my internship… we found a body. And… it's dumb…"

"A body?"

"I'd say that's very not dumb," Kaminari said concerned. Why was this the first he was hearing of this? Usually the school rumor mill was so reliable. If not for it's information, than the implication of information. "Are you okay?"

Midoriya was starting to do that thing where he turtled into his shirt. "It's fine. It's not like it could hurt me. It was just a body."

"Seeing dead people isn't normal," Shinsou said rubbing his forehead. "Midoriya, being upset about seeing a corpse and having nightmares is a perfectly normal reaction."

Midoriya grimaced and wouldn't meet their eyes. "It- i know- it's not like that…"

"What do you mean?" Shinsou asked all serious.

Midoriya just looked deeply guilty and disturbed.

"Oh, man, it's the murder dream isn't it?" Kaminari said instantly understanding.

That earned him startled looks from both boys.

“Y-yeah, how did you know?” Midoriya gasped, looking pale and anxious.

Shinsou pressed his lips into a hard line.

“I get those dreams all the time,” Kaminari reassured, wondering if this would be the day he got his ‘crazy’ sticker. “I used to accidentally shock people before I figured out how to control my quirk. And my brain totally ran with the ‘what if you kill someone’ thing. And like i still have those dreams sometimes, especially since with training if been using my quirk on people intentionally now. And… I mean, yeah… I’ve committed dream murder.”

Midoriya stared at him with wide, luminous eyes. But it was less a ‘you’re a creep’ look and more a ‘someone understands me’ look.

“You get those, too?” Shinsou grumbled and when the two boys turned to him he rubbed the back of his neck looking uncomfortable. “Er… just a guilt complex thing I guess? It’s one of the reasons I have insomnia in the first place. Murder dreams are kinda common… because it’d be kinda easy for me. Especially when I get creative…”

“I feel you, dude,” Kaminari said gently nudging Shinsou’s knee with his own knee. Shinsou shot him a look somewhere between grateful and wary.

Midoriya looked a little relieved, but guilty too. “It’s just… more vivid now that there’s a body… and that smell. Oh god the smell. I’m never gonna forget that smell…”

Kaminari rubbed Midoriya’s back, hoping that that was comforting to him. Midoriya hid his face in his hands and was possibly having vivid flashbacks. Kaminari sadly knew the feeling. He’d never smelled a corpse, but the smell of burnt flesh from when he discharged on a human was part of his nightmares. Sometimes Kaminari struggled to eat cooked meat because of that smell.

“You’ll be fine,” Kaminari reassured. “I figure the fact that you have the morals to feel guilty about dream murder mean that you’re probably not gonna be a murderer, right? Like it’s nightmare because you’re scared of it. And if you’re scared of it, you aren’t gonna do it.”

“... that’s weirdly profound,” Shinsou said in a slightly skeptical voice. Like he expected Kaminari to have gotten it from a fortune cookie or something.

“It’s been known to happen,” Kaminari said proudly.

Midoriya gave a watery chuckle. “Weirdly that does make me feel better... thanks.”

“No problem,” Kaminari grinned dopily. “If i’m gonna be up at four in the morning, might as well be helping a friend, right?”

Shinsou snorted, “get on my level. Real friends don’t sleep at all. They die of exhaustion like men.”

Midoriya giggled. And Kaminari’s eyes sparkled with mischief. “Women can die of exhaustion to you, Shinsou. Are you really going to play your female friends like this?”

“My female friends have the self preservation to not die of sleep exhaustion.”

“Touche,” Midoriya said.

“I have self-preservation,” Kaminari defended himself. “I just also have ADHD. So it’s easily distracted.”

“Sure, Jan.” Shinsou smiled smugly.

“Having it around sometimes is better than having no self preservation at all,” Kaminari crossed his arms over his chest.

“Are you really going to play Midoriya like this,” Shinsou said. “Right in front of him.”

“It’s not that I don’t have self-preservation,” Midoriya said defensively. “I just value other people’s lives more. I’ll have you know I haven’t died even once yet.”

“As opposed the the many times, everyone else has died,” Shinsou said sarcastically.

“Don’t tempt fate, Midoriya. You know what happened last time,” Kaminari reminded, only have teasing.

“That villain attack wasn’t my fault,” Midoriya scowled.

“I’m not saying it is,” Kaminari tilted his head. “I’m just saying you have a track-record of getting shafted by the universe-”

“Gee, thanks.”

“And I wouldn’t be going out of my way to step on anyone’s toes.”

Midoriya rolled his and gave a dramatic “Fine.”

“Fine, what?” Shinsou said still rocking the teacher vibe.

“Fine. I won’t tempt fate to kill me.” Midoriya promised.

“It’s already trying hard enough as is,” Kaminari said, thinking about all their near death experiences. Giving the set up for an ironic ass whooping is just too dangerous.”

“Sure, thing, mooOOoom,” Midoriya said putting crazy emphasis on the word. Kaminari just stuck his tongue out and Midoriya giggled again.

“Achem.” a tired voice drawled. All three boys froze and the tired glare Aizawa gave them, was enough to cowe all of them. “Bed. Now.”

“Yes, Sensei.” they said trudging out of the bathroom, Midoriya pausing to rinse his vomit mouth with mouthwash.

Kaminari had a feeling they were gonna catch hell in the morning when Aizawa was more awake. But he couldn’t regret it. He felt closer to both boys now.

And oh… Kaminari thought as Midoriya instantly drifted off, back to sleep. Midoriya was still sleeping with his eyes open.

Creepy.

Chapter End Notes

me at four am: you know, Denki’s quirk is kinda messed up
Me at myself: ho, don’t do it.
Me: *writes sad denki stuff*

If i have to be haunted by the harsh reality of his quirk so do you.

-that paragraph about the scary empty places in his head is based off of experience because i have that with my seizure disorder. I might be projecting a bit, though i hear it’s also a adhd thing too.
-yes, shinsou was playing neko atsume
-i also have experience sleeping with my eyes open, it does not make me more aware of my environment when i’m sleeping and it also hurts like hell when you wake up
-mina stealing kaminari’s phone makes her invasion of privacy thing feel like enough of an ongoing problem that i’m gonna have to call her out for it again. i‘ll address it in another chapter.
-okay, so, real talk. You know that thing where a fic puts characters you never see together and make you wasn’t to see them together more. Ironically i did that to myself.

I never see shinsou, kaminari, and midoriya hanging out together and now i want more. So for real, if you know any fics, or if you write any fics with this combination, link them in the comments so i can read them.
-i have like one drawing for the giveaway mostly drawn. i forgot how hard art is

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Trust

Chapter by serenawitchwriter

Chapter Summary

Mina bites off more than she can chew

Chapter Notes

sequel to the four-shot special, will make more sense if you read chapter 21-24

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Okay, so here's the dealio.

Bakugou and Midoriya are awkward as fuck and it's kinda Mina's fault.

Like she admits that she messed up when trying to get the juicy gossip about all the secrets Mido was keeping. She stepped over a line and she is really sorry about it. She'd be sorry even if Aizawa hadn't given her an essay on consent. That paper was hell. But fair. Lesson learned. Never again. She apologized. Bakugou apologized. Everyone in the Bakusquad apologized and Mido accepted the apologies like a good forgiving heroic good boy who's too pure for this world.

Works out right?

But it didn't. Because now all that drama is out in the open and everything is super awkward and tense and like things are less tense than that first week after Midoriya dropped the truth bombs but it's still super weird.

Mido and Blasty kinda made up but Midoriya started avoiding Bakugou if he could help it and Bakugou is trying to pretend everything is normal by acting like more of an asshole than usual. And the class is very clearly still mad at Bakugou and even Mina even if most of the tension has faded.

It was obvious to everyone that Baku has no idea what he's doing when it comes to fixing this atmosphere. He def knew the way he used to act was wrong, but he doesn't know how to act right, so everything he's been doing lately is kinda stilted or over the top. He's aggressively trying to improve… but beyond Kiri's and the crew's positive reinforcement he's has no idea what 'better' is. So he's sort of flailing helplessly and falling back on old habits naturally. It's kinda weird to see Blasty fail at anything but that's just how it be.

Meanwhile Midoriya's been caught up in the wild life he's leading outside of class. Between his internship and training with Nedzu, he's always doing something and doesn't actually spend much time in the dorms anymore. He hangs out with his closer friends of course and is somehow getting closer to random people when no one's looking but he still seems pretty cut off from the rest of the class, which is a shame because he's their sunshine boys and everyone needs a daily dose of Mido.

Maybe he's not avoiding Bakugou per se but he was def not in the same room as him often and the Dekusquad are def on the defensive, randomly bundling the sunshine boy and absconding or shooting glares at Blasty like a pack of wild dogs protecting their puppy.

The point was it was awkward! And Mina hated it! She hated that she was responsible for making everything so awkward. She hated that it wasn't a problem she could fix by just throwing love and support at it.

Mina was what some would call a busy body. But really she just cared about a lot of people and wanted everyone to be happy and having fun. Seeing people smile was one of the reasons she wanted to be a hero. If she saves people, if she gets famous she can make even mooooore people smile! Like All Might! That'd the coolest thing!

But currently she felt like that was kinda the opposite of what she's done. So she had to figure out a way to fix this.

She started by trying to get closer to Bakugou. He should be the easier of the two because she was a lot closer to him already and Midoriya was so shy.

It didn't work out as well as she wished it did.

One of the things Mina liked about Blasty was that he was always so honest and straightforward. You'd think that would mean he had nothing to hide but *bluh* ! It turned out his sweat made him slippery as hell. Every time she tried to talk to him about feelings and stuff it felt like jumping on a live grenade. Usually he either got angry or frustrated or kicked her out of the room. Normally annoying him was fun but ugh when it came to anything remotely Midoriya he got extra flustered and growly. He even bit her once, which wasn't cool or safe probably (she could've melted his mouth!). So it wasn't going well.

Kiri and Kami weren't much help either. Kiri was all about giving the boys time to work things out on their own because forcing emotions is unhealthy and blah, blah, blah. Kami told her that maybe she should mind her own business because they all saw how last time turned out and like… she got it okay, she really messed up! But she was a fixer! She was a problem solver! And she couldn't just let a problem that needed solving, not get solved!

On top of that, Bakugou was in a bad place in general. While the Bakusquad and Midoriya had forgiven Bakugou, the rest of the class… not so much. He was being punished what with the anti quirk cuffs and all (she knows it's mean, but it's kinda fun to watch Blasty try to blow stuff up and then five seconds realize he can't. It was always really anticlimactic). But then on top of that he was being punished by having most of the class treat him coldly. He was definitely feeling the negativity and Mina kept catching him get this longing, rueful (Baku taught her that word) looks as some of the other classmates turned their back on him

It was really sad and especially because he'd only recently started earning the classes trust and respect. And he lost it almost instantly.

So any attempt that Mina made to even bring up Mido resulted in him getting really defensive.

So she went after Midoriya next. And that should have been easier because Mido was like slowly infiltrating the Bakusquad. Like he'd gotten close to Sero, Kiri, and Kami recently. That meant she was next! She had an in!

But he was always busy and even trying to get in on his crazy schedule was ridiculous. Mina already knew about his insane workout schedule because she took the ‘Deku’s death regimen’ challenge. She was not going back. She was never going to the gym with him ever again. He was a secret sadist when it came to his workout routine. Never again.

Then he was always busy with his internship and never around. He was at least hanging out with Kiri then, but Kiri wasn’t helping her so whelp. Then on top of that he was always doing homework or researching something. Mina did not understand how anyone could spend that much time reading. Like she physically rejected that scenario. If she read as much as Mido she’d break out in hives or puke or something. And good luck talking to Midoriya when he was like that. Even the words that were said loud enough to be understood were gibberish to Mina. So she was not getting involved with that...

Which meant there was like no other time she could talk to him. Even during meals he had a book with him. How does he do that? How has his head not exploded?

So the next step was going through her friends. Kiri and Kami already refused. Iida had gotten really uncomfortable and pretty much ran for it. Tsuyu just stared at Mina until she got really uncomfortable. And even Uraraka who was usually down for shenanigans and helping people said she didn’t think it was a good idea.

So Mina tried to drop it.

She really did.

But…

Nedzu set her up.

She knows he did. She didn’t know what planning and chaotic energy made this plan happen. But he gave her the opening and it was impossible not to use it. She didn’t trust it. Nedzu

absolutely terrified her. The fact that he was gradually corrupting her boi Mido was even scarier. But like- she wanted to help.

So it was okay right?

Right.

-

Okay, so it was the final exam for the semester and Mina, Bakugou, and Midoriya had gotten teamed up to go against Cementos. To change things up they'd all be wearing quirk suppressant cuffs to signify the times when the fights they won't be able to use their quirks. After the year they had the staff had apparently decided that they had enough experience fighting with quirks and needed a taste of a wider range of fighting styles. This probably explained the afternoon martial arts classes that a few of the teachers started offering (not Aizawa surprising but Mina suspected that was because he already had too much work).

Mina was kinda excited. She'd been working pretty hard on her martial arts and being paired with two of the most powerful students couldn't be a bad thing even if things were awkward between them. And it was Cementos. Granted he wasn't the best person to fight when it came to hand to hand combat but it was better than fighting Nedzu again.

"Hi, Mina," Mido greeted, raising his hand in a wave. He looked tired. "Kacchan."

Baku shifted uncomfortably and grunted.

"Hi, Mido!" Mina said bouncing on the balls of her feet. "You ready for the exam!? You got a plan!? I bet you have a plan! You're the plan man! Man with the plan. Plan of the man. So… what's the plan?"

Mido looked slightly overwhelmed. Blasty rolled his eyes exaggeratedly.

"Well, um, with Cemontos and the quirk cuff limitation hand to hand combat will be ineffectual. So the best plan is escape and avoidance," he said, half mumbling. "I got some

flashbangs that'll probably help aid our escape and if i'm right, Kacchan's suppressant cuffs don't prevent him from producing nitroglycerin sweat because that's a mutation. They just prevent him from emitting the triggering sparks. So in theory his gauntlets should still work if they have a different igniter."

"What!?" Baku's eyes widened and he turned to give Mido a 'why didn't you tell me?' look. It was kinda funny. " *Shit* . Why didn't I think of that?" he growled angrily.

Mido smiled awkwardly, "I'm sure you would have figured it out eventually, Kacchan."

"I don't need your pity."

The radio outside the training field spoke up and told them to enter and various time limits and rules and stuff.

And they entered and it was a maze. A cement maze with pretty tall walls.

"Escape and avoid," Baku muttered. "Right."

"I think i have chalk in my utility pouch," Midoriya said examining the wall. "But it would be easier if we walked along the top of the wall than brute forcing the maze aspect."

"Isn't that kinda cheating at maze," Mina wondered, not really complaining.

"It's a villain fight," Midoriya said seriously. "You need to take advantage of any advantage you can get."

"Alright, raccoon eyes," Bakugou said linking his fingers together and giving her a leg up. Mina grinned wildly, she loved climbing stuff that she's not supposed to climb almost as much as dancing.

“Thank you, Blasty,” she said smiling wildly as he pushed her up and she dragged herself over the wall. The thickness of the wall was only about five inches so she was straddling it instead of balancing on her feet. She looked out with her better view of the maze and she was really glad that they were taking this route instead of blindly wondering the maze.

Mina glanced down as Baku and Mido argued typically. Then with shocking grace and determination Midoriya ran up the wall and caught the edge and climbed up beside her. It was so freaking sick.

“Dude!” she enthused. “Hardcore parkour!”

Midoriya grinned bashfully. “I’ve been practicing. Ochako and Sero-kun take it really seriously.”

“Oh, she’s Ochako now?” Mina teased. Mido’s face instantly turned pink, Mina’s favorite color.

“It-she-just-uh-she-said-it-was-fine-cause-we’ve-known-each-other-so-long-and-everything-so-it-made-sense-and-we’ve-been-through-a-lot-it-is-kinda-weird-but-it’s-not-a-big-deal-please-don’t-make-a-deal-out-of-it-were-just-friends.”

Mina laughed, “I have no idea what you just said.”

Bakugou, never one to be outdone scaled the wall too, looking like an angry cat the entire time. Mina would give the style points to Midoriya, but she knew Bakugou would be using his rocket power if he had the option so he had to adjust. Really their parkour skills were pretty equal.

“Okay,” Midoriya said getting back on task. “The exit should be that way. Would you guys rather climb safely or jump from wall to wall. Jumping might be faster but it’s more likely to lead to injury if something goes wrong.”

Blasty rolled his eyes. “Grow a pair.” he said jumping to the next wall with impressive ease.

“Hell yeah! Parkour!” Mina shouted also making the jump. Midoriya frowned at the noise but followed behind and they started making progress like that. Jumping and crawling along the top of the walls until something shook beneath them.

“Shit!” Baku shouted as the wall collapsed and they all went tumbling down. Mina rolled to distribute the energy of the fall and avoided getting injured. Sitting up she looked towards Mido and Baku and found they were fine. Midoriya was incredibly tense though.

“Wha-” Mina started.

The Cementos clipped through the wall like a jumpscare nightmare and they all screamed and started running.

Cementos lumbered after them not saying anything and that was scary because he was normally so nice and talkative.

Still better then Nedzu! Mina reminded herself.

Still better then Nedzu!

“Get behind me!” Bakugou cried and he threw Mina ahead of him where Midoriya already stood. He turned back towards Cementos and grinned manically, pulling the pin on one of his gauntlets. The blast sent them all flying back and hurt Mina’s ears like hell but it gave them the distance to get away from Cementos and his eerily blank face.

They took a moment to catch their breath and the Midoriya climbed to peek over the maze again. He almost immediately dropped back down and yelped, “I think he saw me!”

“What the fuck!?”

“His face was peeking over the maze too!”

“Shit.”

“We should move.”

And so the second part of their journey that involved wandering through the maze occasionally peeking over the top of the maze and randomly being accosted by Cementos like they were in a horror game.

All things considered it could have been going worse.

Mina jinxed it!

Oh no she jinxed it!

Villains showed up.

And they were still wearing suppressant cuffs.

Thank god for Bakugou’s gauntlets. Midoriya’s watch also turned out to be a life saver. He had a panic button on it for when he got attacked by villains and that was how Cementos found them.

But maybe that was a mistake because rather than let them keep fighting or break their restaurants. For their protection, he put opened a hole beneath them and closed it. Locking them in a room in the ground away from the fighting.

Not cool.

It took them about ten minutes to conclude there wasn't a way out. Even if Bakugou refilled his sweat gauntlets it probably wouldn't be safe for him to set it off in their room. They were properly trapped.

Whelp…

Mina got bored really quickly. That was a thing with her. She needed to be stimulated. But hanging out in a dark room, lit only by the flashlights off their utility belts was boring and Mido and Baku were still awkward.

So she had to ask. She had to!

"What the hell are you guys doing?" she said gesturing vaguely at the space between them.

"Huh?"

"What?"

"With this thing between you. It's stupid and it doesn't really make sense so why aren't you fixing it?" Mina tried to clarify.

Mido glanced away. "It's not that simple."

"There's nothing between us." Baku scowled.

Mina raised her eyebrows as if to say ‘why so defensive?’ without saying anything. Midoriya sighed through his nose and wouldn’t look at her. Bakugou to be contrary glared her down as if challenging her to contradict him.

“There is definitely something between you,” she said not backing down. “And it’s been making you guys act weird and awkward and I don’t really know what the problem is beyond the whole bullying shit. But Mido has forgiven you and Baku has apologized so I don’t get why you’re all still weird about. You used to be friends, right? Just go back to being friends.”

“Do you want to die raccoon eyes! Friendship doesn’t work like that! And even if it did who says i want to be friend with fucking Deku?”

Even Midoriya gave him a skeptical look and Mina heaved a humongous sigh. “I just don’t get what your problem is,” Mina said gesturing vaguely. “Like i know you’ve always been a bit of a dick, Blasty, but i don’t get why you’d be mad enough at Mido to tell him to kill himself. Or like why Mido is so forgiving all the time,” she looked at Midoriya and noted, “that’s really weird, you know, or just what kinda shit is bad enough that you have to be so dumb about this. You’re friends right?”

Baku and Mido’s eyes met for a moment and then they quickly glanced away.

“It’s complicated,” Mido muttered.

“Then uncomplicate it,” Mina said pouting slightly. “Look I had a fight with one of my middle school friends because she threw my favorite pen out the window. We got over that. I mean how serious would your fight have been. You were like ten.”

The boys shared a quick look again, and this time Baku looked angrier when he glanced away. Midoriya looked more anxious.

“I don’t see how it’s any of your business, Pinkiepie,” Bakugou bit out. “It’s in the past, so just fucking drop it.”

“But it’s not in the past. You guys are always avoiding each other and yelling and fighting. And like that makes sense for Midoriya given how you treated him, Baku, but still all these weird looks and awkward silences are driving me crazy and making everyone else in class really tense. So let’s just,” Mina made a rainbow with her hands. “Work this out. Like therapy. We clearly have the time.”

“Mina-chan, I’m not sure-” Mido started.

“You know what, fuck it.” Bakugou interrupted. “She’s right. I’m tired of this bullshit edging around each other. What is your fucking problem, Deku?”

“What’s my problem?” Midoriya repeated incredulously.

“Yeah. I’ve been trying to make things right for weeks now but you keep avoiding me. So what’s your deal?”

“I haven’t been avoiding you,” Midoriya said sounding slightly annoyed. “I’ve had a lot going on.”

“That never stopped you from bugging me before.”

“I’ve never been this busy before,” Midoriya said reasonably, then he tacked on, “and it’s not like my life revolves around you. I’m not always ‘bugging you’.”

Bakugou scoffed hotly. “Yeah, sure. Every other minute you’re like ‘Kacchan, let me play!’ ‘Kacchan, wait up!’ ‘Kacchan don’t do that!”

“You mean for the fifteen minutes after school before i walk home?” Midoriya said pouting slightly. “That was barely any time out of my schedule and if you haven’t noticed i don’t do that anymore.”

Bakugou snorted. “Yeah. Because you’re busy. Sure.”

“I’m not the one with the problem, Kacchan,” Midoriya said tiredly. “I’ve been trying to make up with you for years. Just because i have better things to do now then bend over backwards to accommodate you doesn’t mean i’m not making an effort.”

“Bending over backwards? Is that what you called it?” Bakugou pulled his lips back from his teeth. “More like spreading your ass cheeks to get fucked. You were weak.”

Something flashed in Midoriya’s eyes and his expression dropped to something colder than normal.

“Woah, Bakugou,” Mina said, sensing something amiss. “That seems a little far-”

“Well it’s true isn’t it? You only grew a fucking spine when you got a fucking quirk. Every other time you tried to stand up to me you were a stuttering crying mess. It was pathetic. Yet instead of get mad and actually throw a punch, you’d just roll over like a goddamn dog and let me kick your ass. If you were going to stand up to me at all why the fuck did you stand there and take it.”

“I was trying to do the right thing!” Midoriya declared.

“You were trying to be a victim!”

And suddenly Midoriya was standing, cheeks flushed with anger, “DO YOU THINK ANY OF THAT WAS EASY FOR ME? DO YOU THINK I WAS GIVING YOU SECOND CHANCES FOR SHITS AND GIGGLES? I WANTED TO GIVE YOU A CHANCE. IT’S NOT MY FAULT YOU DECIDED TO SPIT IN MY FACE EVERY CHANCE YOU WERE GIVEN!”

“ONLY A DUMBASS WOULD GIVE ME ALL THOSE CHANCES,” Bakugou shouted back also standing. Mina leaned back, not expecting things to escalate so much. “THAT’S

WHAT I DON'T FUCKING GET. ONLY A COMPLETE MORON WOULD KEEP GOING BACK TO SOMEONE WHO HURT THEM THE WAY I HURT YOU AND YET YOU KEPT ON SMILING INNOCENTLY LIKE A STUPID WOODEN DOLL AND IT DOESN'T MAKE FUCKING SENSE! I DON'T GET YOU. WHAT THE HELL IS WRONG WITH YOU? *WHY DO YOU CARE ABOUT **ME** !?"*

Midoriya paused and bit his lip before quietly muttering. "...I care about everyone, Kacchan."

Bakugou scowled darkly. "Why? What possible reason could you have to trust someone like me? To give any piece of shit like me the time of day? How can you put yourself out there like some kind of-"

"...I don't trust you, Kacchan." Midoriya said as though the thought of trusting him had never crossed his mind.

Bakugou froze. "-what?"

"I don't trust you," Midoriya repeated, pulling a face.

Bakugou seemed to be doing some heavy mental math to get over this new hurdle.

"T-then you were lying all those times you complimented me!" Bakugou snapped, and Mina felt kinda annoyed at him because that obviously wasn't the point. "You *have* been looking down on me!"

"What? No!" Midoriya huffed frustrated "Of course I mean it. Trust doesn't have anything to do with liking and respecting you, Kacchan."

"Hah!?" and despite how aggressive the shout was he sounded genuinely confused. "You 'like and respect' me, but you don't trust me? How does that make any sense? Why don't you trust me?"

“You don’t *deserve* my trust!” Midoriya said flatly . “ *You haven’t for years* !”

And Bakugou still looked confused, but Mina caught the inexplicable flash of hurt in his eye. He hunched his shoulders defensively but didn’t say anything. Apparently he didn’t know what to say.

Midoriya heaved a long sigh and seemed remarkably like Aizawa-sensei. Mido was always attuned to other people's emotions whether he liked it or not. “Look,” he said searching for the right words. “I’ll be honest, Kacchan. I can’t say this isn't personal. I mean you aren’t the only person I have trust issues with, apart from my mom and like three teachers here at ua, adults in general haven’t exactly been reliable to me. I can’t… I just don’t think there’s anyone I can tell everything to, not even my mom, not even All Might, not even Ochako and the others,” and for a dark moment, Mina got the strange impression that Midoriya had a looming shadow behind him, full of secrets and dark thoughts that he’d never say out loud. It was kinda disturbing to see over the resident sunshine boy. But it made her more sad than scared.

“But we- you,” Midoriya said, gesturing at the strangely subdued Bakugou. There was something raw in his voice, like this talk has been a long way coming, and Midoriya barely had a hold on his emotions. “You’ve chosen to hurt me, every chance you’ve been given. Even when we were making up, it was a fight. And just… I can see the good in you. I know you’re going to be a great hero, I admire your determination and your intelligence and how strong you are. But I can’t trust you. I can’t trust someone who’s spent their entire life hurting me. That just seems-”

“Stupid.” Bakugou supplied, voice deep and hurt. It was hard to tell if he was finishing Midoriya’s sentence or just calling himself stupid. Bakugou ran his hand through his hair and looked almost as though he was having a life altering revelation. “I’m an idiot, aren’t I?” he laughed ruefully, tears beading the corner of his eyes. “All this time, I thought you were being stupid and naive… I thought you were forgiving me… but you weren’t, were you?”

Midoriya bit his lip. “I don’t have to trust you to forgive you, Kacchan. I forgave you a long time ago.”

Bakugou just shook his head, not truly understanding Midoriya's forgiveness. Mina didn't really get it either, even though she's seen him pour his heart out to people so many times. Midoriya was always reaching out. Mina supposed forgiving the pain someone caused him was part of that. Now that she thought of it, Midoriya's ability to keep reaching was admirable as hell.

"But…" Midoriya said, eyes taking that determined glow. "That doesn't mean i'm not trying. It'll take more than an apology and some stupid quirk suppressant cuffs to fix this. I'm sorry for that."

Bakugou shoulders slumped tiredly, but it was like a weight was coming off his back. "Dumbass," he grumbled. "You apologize too much. Don't apologize for actually making sense." he ran a hand through his hair one last time and then turned and banged on the cement wall. "Hey, you bastards, you ready to let us out, yet?"

No one responded.

Fifteen minutes passed. They still didn't have any ideas on how to break out.

The air was starting to feel incredibly tense and stale and even though the boys had gotten some of the angst out into the open things were still painfully awkward.

Mina honestly didn't know what to make of the argument they'd had. It seemed so much worse than what she was expecting even with the knowledge that their fight had escalated to the point of Baku telling Mido to kill himself. They'd always seemed so in sync. Mina figured there friendship had to be pretty strong for them to have such a good read on each other. And they were always looking at each other and making eye contact and motivating each other. They seemed like better friends than enemies but that… that argument was a *thing* .

Honestly Mina was feeling like she'd bitten off more than she could chew. She thought she was doing the right thing… but maybe Midoriya was right. Maybe this wasn't something she could fix.

“Could you stop shaking your leg!” Baku snapped at her. He looked like he was working himself into a fighting mood and honestly Mina was kinda down for a fight. It’d only been fifteen minutes but and angst or not she was bored..

“Make me!” she said challengingly.

“Guys, don’t.” Midoriya said harshly.

They both went silent at the command. Mina idly started braiding her hair.

Five more minutes passed and now Mina was braiding Mido’s hair while Baku paced like a caged tiger.

Five more minutes and Baku was laying flat on his back staring at the ceiling, wile Mina tried to do a handstand. Midoriya was doodling in his notebook. He offered to let them draw but he only had one pencil and she figured it was better to let him do his thing. They did get a few games of tic tac toe out of it.

Ten more minutes passed and it was really apparent that their boredom wasn’t going anywhere. They kept checking their watches and finding no time had gone by. It was maddening.

Five more minutes, of dumb small talk and doodling and Mina was ready to get angsty again.

“Midoriya, why do you hate yourself?” Mina asked finally. It was a question that had been a long way coming. Ever since he first admitted it when under the effect of the truth quirk she had wanted to know. But this was about more than satiating her curiosity. It was a question that he needed to answer if they were going to move forward. She knew it in her gut.

Midoriya’s face darkened but it was Bakugou who grumbled, “You don’t have the right to ask that.”

Mina glanced away self-consciously. The room was too quiet. All she could hear were the other two's breathing and their subtle shifting. When she got up the nerve to look at Midoriya's face, he wore an expression of steady determination, at odds with the situation. He usually only got that expression when he was in a fight or getting pumped up for a battle.

The tension held for what felt like hours more but Midoriya spoke all the same, voice soft and holding a startling vulnerability that chilled Mina. Like it was being forced out of him even though he didn't have to say anything.

"It's irrational," he began and he wouldn't look at them instead focusing on a spot on his favorite red shoes. "I know that. Logically it doesn't make sense to hate myself. I… I haven't done anything wrong. Not really…" Midoriya's expression was intense and distant. He went silent for a long moment.

"It's like…" Midoriya tried to come up with the words to describe it, but trailed off, finding none.

"Sometimes I just…" he tried again and went silent.

Bakugou gave an irritable huff and said with startling bluntness. "It's like looking in the mirror and seeing your own worst enemy. It's knowing every shitty thing you do, and every shitty thought you think is all on you. You did it. You fucked up and you're responsible for it. And that says everything about who you are. Even if everyone else is too stupid to see what a piece of shit you are, you know. You always know and you can't escape that fact."

Both Mina and Midoriya looked at Bakugou in surprise. Midoriya's eyes had gone wide and there was something there that Mina couldn't really parce. It wasn't surprise or vulnerability or even empathy. It was almost… calculating? But that wasn't it either… irritation? Whatever it was it was old and it was hard and it was gone quickly to be replace with a look of guilt and tiredness.

"Yeah…" Midoriya said and the word definitely had the weight of understanding behind it. He knew exactly what Bakugou was talking about and that was sad. Mina felt the weight of her own insecurities on her back but she ignored them as usual.

“But why?” she asked quietly. She didn’t get how these two paragons could hate themselves. Like to an extent she knew they had issues, but those could be overcome. They have so many other good things going for them. They had lots of friends, they had powerful quirks, they were really smart, they had loving parents (she’d gotten a few of the cookies Midori-mom sometimes sent), they were both incredibly strong and brave. So why did they hate themselves?

When the good outweighed the bad, what reason could they have to view themselves so negatively? She didn’t get it.

Midoriya’s expression twisted through expressions for a few long moments. Then he sighed and buried his face in his knees.

Bakugou once again was the one to brave the question. He looked a lot like Midoriya in that moment, eyes on fire with determination, but mouth set in a grim line. Less angry and more… resilient. More experienced and knowing and wary.

“Sometimes… it’s like the me I want to be and the me I am are two different people.” he said, words weighed carefully. His hands were shaking almost like he was in pain. “I know the hero I want to be. I want to help people and be the kind of person people can look up to and… smile. But it’s not who I am. And everyone knows it. Every time I try to be nice or I if I make a joke or- fuck- if I say anything. It either comes out as complete bullshit or it’s regarded with such fucking skepticism that it’s like! Why do I even bother!? What’s the fucking point of trying if it means nothing to you people anyway!?”

Midoriya’s eye’s peeked out from his arms but didn’t completely lift his head. “It means something…” he whispered.

Bakugou flinched slightly. Then he growled at his own weakness. “Maybe to you. But you’re… you. To everyone else, I’m a shitstain or a potential villain or an asshole. Don’t think I haven’t noticed all of you saying that.” he shot a side-eye at Mina and she sat up a little straighter in offense.

“Hey, none of us have said you’re a villain recently!” she protested. “And you can’t blame us for calling you out when you act like an asshole! It’s so you stop acting like an asshole! If we don’t then you’d just keep acting like an asshole, wouldn’t you?”

“I *KNOW* THAT!” Bakugou snapped aggressively. Midoriya sat up giving Bakugou a warning look in case he decided to attack her. He bared his teeth at the boy, made a frustrated sound in the back of his throat and then ran his hand through his hair. “I know.” he said getting some control of himself and honestly Mina was kinda impressed. He definitely wouldn’t have calmed down like that a year ago. “That’s the fucking problem. I shouldn’t *need* to be called out. But there’s something fucking wrong with me that… just makes me act like a garbage human. I know that sounds dumb and after I- after I fuck up I always feel like shit! But in the moment- when I’m angry- it’s just comes out of me! Like vomit! I HATE IT! I HATE THAT I’M LIKE THIS,” he gestured at himself, “AND I HATE THAT I DON’T KNOW WHY I’M FUCKING LIKE THIS! I HATE IT AND THEN! AGHH! NO ONE CARES! NO ONE GETS IT! I’M EITHER THE GODDAMN SECOND COMING OF ALL MIGHT OR I’M THE WORST PIECE OF GARBAGE IN EXISTENCE AND IT’S ALL SO FUCKING STUPID!”

“No one thinks you’re garbage!” Mina gasped.

“You literally said my personality was garbage when we went to the USJ!” Bakugou snapped back. Mina didn’t remember that but a lot of stuff happened that day so who could blame her.

“And you’ve literally called me a mediocre slimy bitch,” Mina said crossing her arms over her chest. “If you can’t take an insult maybe don’t spend all your time insulting people.”

“You are a mediocre slimy bitch.” Bakugou said petulantly

“I am a *QUEEN!”*

“Guys!” Midoriya cut in, reminding Mina that they were having a heart to heart. Bakugou was visibly more relaxed though, so she counted that as a win. “Kacchan, what she means is...we know that you’re trying. And your issues, they aren’t all or nothing. It’s not black and white. Sometimes you cross a line and we’re here to call you on it. But sometimes your… personality is the thing we like best about you. You’re bold and brave and honest. And yeah sometimes you take it to it’s negative extreme but that doesn’t make you a bad person.”

“Yeah,” Mina agreed. “I happen to like your shouty side. It can be fun and sometimes i am just teasing you. It’s no more personal than you calling me a slimy bitch is. We’re friends. There’s some wiggle room.”

Bakugou scowled but didn’t seem nearly as upset as before. “I just which i knew where that line was. It’s so easy for everyone else. But for me… I don’t know.”

Mina smiled and cuddled up to him. “You’ll figure it out, Blasty, and until you got us to help you along the way.”

And she could tell he was in a vulnerable mood because he didn’t immediately push her away. Mido for his part had a soft warm look on his face.

But it slipped away when his thoughts came back around to her question. Mina bit her lip and considered not saying anything. But… no. they had really gone out on a limb just to accommodate her selfish questions. If they were being honest. It wouldn’t be fair if she didn’t put herself out there too.

“I used to hate myself too, you know?” she said, feeling her muscles tensing despite herself. It was for the power of friendship she reminded herself. She could be vulnerable for them.

“Hah?” Baku asked incredulously. Mido looked at her with concern.

Outside explosions rumbled as the villains and heroes fought. It felt miles away.

Okay, maybe she couldn’t do this…

No! No! Friendship!

“I’m trans,” Mina said closing her eyes tightly so she didn’t have to see their reaction. Oof. like ripping off a bandage. Please be worth it.

“Hah?” Bakugou ask in the exact same tone. There was a noise and Mina could only assume that Mido had kicked him.

“We support you no matter what, Mina,” he said.

Mina took the chance of peeking out of her eyes and Midoriya’s expression was still soft and warm. Bakugou just looked slightly confused like he didn’t understand what she meant.

Laughing nervously, Mina sat up and pulled away from Bakugou. Twirling one of her small braid with her finger she said shyly. “I was born with a boy body, but I always felt like I was a girl. It kinda made me insecure growing up, since I kinda knew I wasn’t like other boys my age but I wasn’t like other girls either. Everyone just thought I was kinda weird and no one… well it was like I was too much of one thing or the other. I couldn’t play with the girls because I was a boy but I was too girly to play with the boys and I don’t know…”

She was officially having trouble look at the boys. She’d never confessed this to anyone and it was a lot harder than she expected.

“In my second year of middle school I finally put words to it. And I got really *really* lucky with my parents because they actually, you know, got it, and supported me. And we were moving anyway so my mom suggested that we visit a specialist and the specialist changed my gender for me so I could enter the new school as a girl.”

She dared peeked at Mido and Baku’s faces. Mido looked fascinated, like he was on the edge of going into analysis mode. Bakugou’s expression was blank, which just made her kinda nervous.

“A-anyway the quirk has to be reapplied on a yearly basis, so if I ever change my mind about this I can just let it wear off, but I’ve never looked back.” she smiled kinda shyly looking at her hands. “I can’t explain how freeing it is, to just... fit in my body. To feel like myself instead of someone else…” Mina shifted, feeling their silence. “But… um… yeah. When I

was a boy I kinda hated my body and myself. I was pretty young so I didn't get why I couldn't just be like normal kids and like myself like everyone else seemed to, so…" Mina shrugged. "I don't know, I'm happier now."

Mina's voice came out tight and she started to cry, though she really didn't understand why. Bakugou huffed and suddenly Mina felt a warm hand on her head between her horns. Mina looked up at Baku with surprise but he was glancing away like he didn't want to acknowledge he was doing something nice. He ruffled her hair.

"Like anyone cares about your gender," he grumbled "You're a fucking heroes, that's what matters. Gender has nothing to do with it."

Mina laughed tearfully and smiled with relief. Midoriya smiled back at her. She felt the safest she's felt in a long time. Being trans wasn't really something she'd been open about. The only people who knew were her parents and Kirishima and that was because of a meltdown she had in front of him. She knew she was incredibly lucky that she was surrounded by so many supportive people. She'd heard some of the things people who didn't know she was trans said about trans people. It didn't make her eager to share her truth.

"We like you for who you are, Mina," Midoriya said warmly.

She dragged the boys into a hug.

It was still another five minutes before someone spoke again. The feeling that no one was coming for them was really starting to kick in now.

"I think…" Midoriya said. "I think i'm ready to talk."

"You don't have to-" Bakugou started.

"No. I want to." Midoriya said firmly. Somewhere outside another explosion rumbled like distant thunder. "You guys both trusted me… it's only fair."

“Trust isn’t about being fair,” Bakugou said tone strained.

“Maybe not…” Midoriya said softly. “And- and I can’t promise that I trust you guys completely…” Midoriya’s eyes were wet with tears. “But I want to try.”

Mina felt a dirty crawling sensation up her skin. She respected Midoriya a lot. He was brave and kind and heroic to a fault. The fact that he was reaching out to her, to them, should have warmed her heart.

But it didn’t.

Because to some extent she knew that she hadn’t earned it. She hadn’t really earned his trust or his honesty. He was just trying to be kind at his own expense. And maybe that was kinda scary. That he’s give part of himself away while ignoring his own feelings on the matter. Maybe it was unhealthy.

But even still, she had no right to silence him either. It still made her guilty. That he felt the need to do this to himself, that she was partially responsible for putting him in this situation.

Midoriya took a deep breath and began. “I’m… I’m not as good as a person as I pretend to be.” That earned a sharp look from Bakugou. “Not because I’m a bad person- not because I’ve done anything wrong. I know where my morals are and I stick to them. I just…”

Midoriya paused to breath for a few seconds. No one spoke in that silence.

“I just… it’s like there’s this pit in my stomach. This black cold pit where I store all my anger and hatred and determination. It lives in me like a snake coiled up and waiting to lash out at the world but I push it down and try to ignore it. And that part of me- that darkness, it doesn’t care about anyone.”

Midoriya wiped at his face and sniffed.

“When I touch that part of me… it’s like any empathy I have disappears. I just- it’s apathetic. It’s borderline sociopathic and instead of wanting to help or reach out to anyone, I just… I don’t care. It’s the part of me that wants to hurt people. It’s the part of me that understands that despite everything there’s no one who can really save me.”

His voice dropped a little deeper at the end and once again Mina felt the weight of an unknown dark history there. The bullying couldn’t have been that bad could it? She felt like there was more to it than that. Some deeper betrayal that she could only guess at. Who hurt him?

Mina glanced at Bakugou and saw his eyes were wide and glinting with conflicting emotions.

“A-and the thing is… it’s not that I really hate this part of me. It serves a purpose. It fuels my determination, and helps me fight my fear and move forward in spite of everything. And everyone. But… it scares me.” Midoriya would no longer look at them. “Because it would be easier if I embraced it.”

Midoriya turned over his hand examining the delicate violence of the scar tissue. “Life would be so much easier if I stopped caring about people. If I just gave up on humanity all together. Then- then I’d be free. No more fighting, no more injuring myself, no more worrying about what others will think about me or do to me. I could just… I could rest. I wouldn’t have to hurt anymore.”

Mina found she was crying. This? This was going on this entire time? This was something Midoriya, her little ball of sunshine, was thinking about?

“So I hate the part of me that wants that. I hate that it’s so tempting to give in to my darkness. Because I love people. I really do. So many people in this world are amazing and kind and bright and hurting too. So many people deserve to be saved and all I want to do is be the one that saves them. T-to give them the help that I almost got too late.

“I hate that I sometimes want to give up on my dream…”

Midoriya went quiet and breathed slow steady breathes once more. His eyes had an empty glassy look to them now. He seemed far away, even though he was just a few feet away.

Abruptly Bakugou moved forward and pulled Midoriya into a hug. The green haired boy flinched at first, than he froze as though startled to feel arms around him. Light gradually returned to his eyes. He returned Bakugou's hug.

"Idiot," Bakugou said when he let go. He was crying too and he ruffled Mido's fluffy locks trying to lighten the mood. "Wanting to be selfish is normal, dumbass… you-you really have things backwards if you think for a second you're a bad person for… not wanting to hurt…"

Midoriya was crying hard now and he looked at Bakugou with pure, startling admiration. Bakugou shifted uncomfortably under the look.

"I… fuck… I should say I'm sorry again. Ugh." Bakugou ran a hand through his thick blond hair. "I...I really fucked up our relationship, didn't I?"

"Relationships go both ways, Kacchan," Midoriya said giving him a small but bright smile. "I could have tried harder to understand you, too."

Bakugou snorted and glance away, crossing his arms over his chest and returning to his tough guy persona. "As if a stupid Deku could dream of comprehending the depths my mind." the words held no heat and it was very clear that he was blowing hot air.

Midoriya laughed and it was like the sun shining in their darkened room. Smiling herself Mina moved forward and pulled Midoriya and Bakugou into a group hug. She felt a strong rush of affection for the two of them and said, still a little wetly. "I'm sorry, too. I didn't realize that what I was getting into was so serious. I should have respected your space and I'm sorry if I hurt you by bringing all this up."

Bakugou scoffed dismissively. "If anything it was about time someone made us have this conversation. We've been dancing around it for way to long."

“Sticking your nose where it doesn’t belong is part of being a hero,” Midoriya said, smiling tiredly. “But…” and his expression turned a little more serious. “Understanding how others might feel is important, too… people have boundaries for a reason.”

Mina nodded, hugging them again, harder this time, appreciating that they were so forgiving and good.

It was still a while before the teachers came back for them. The villain fight above had lasted for over an hour and in that time Cementos had been knocked out leaving the teachers unsure where they went (until Nedzu pulled up the security feed) and unable to safely reach them until Nedzu woke up. Luckily Juzo Honenuki, of 1-b fame, heard and was able to soften a hole into the ground without risking the structural integrity of the room Cemontos made. They got covered in essentially mud (did it count as mud if it was liquefied dirt instead of dirt mixed with water, Midoriya had muttered out loud) but they got out faster than if they had waited for Cementos to wake up. Mina was sure it would be hard to knock out a concrete person (it was hard to knock out Kirishima after all) so his injury must have been pretty serious.

Anyhoo, the three of them were relieved to be breathing fresh and and have the stupid quirk suppressant cuffs off. It was only when they were off that she understood how taxing they were to wear. They were like a corset suffocating part of her. She did not envy the villains who had to wear those for the rest of their life. She was also glad that bakugou would be getting his off soon. Punishment aside, she’d been starting to miss his boom-booms.

The final would be redone tomorrow so they would still get a grade. (none of the students had been injured in the fight today, thankfully, though they were all tired.

Mina, Baku, and Mido were probably noticeably closer after all that. Bakugou and Midoriya’s now easier friendship was especially obvious. But when asked about it Mina would just smile and say they needed to be honest with themselves. It was frustratingly vague but honest enough and Mina kinda enjoyed watching people make frustrated expressions at her.

She was proud that they were all getting better.

She was excited to see them smile more.

Chapter End Notes

-I had a lot of trouble writing in Mina's voice. She's so energetic and social (something I can't relate to) and she was being kinda unlikable this chapter. Making her trans was actually a way of making her more likable and relatable to me. (I'm nb)
-I feel like the theme I was going for was kinda lost under the weight of the conversation they were having. So if you're still mad at Mina for being nosy and not respecting people's boundaries, I'm sorry that the lesson didn't really stick. Writing is hard okay. I'll try to get it right next time
-I think Midoriya sharing the secret about One-for-all in cannon is more interesting this way. Because Midoriya did show trust in Bakugou by letting him in on that secret. But it was a different trust than Midoriya trusting Bakugou with his life. Midoriya knows Bakugou well enough to know that he'd understand the gravity of the secret. Bakugou does have honor and he cares about All Might. If Midoriya just let Bakugou walk off thinking Midoriya lied to him, things would have been so much worse. If Bakugou walked away this anger would go deeper than a blood feud. So Midoriya's choice was 'Bakugou with a death grudge' or 'Bakugou with a dangerous secret that he'll probably won't use'.
I think it shows more trust in Bakugou's character then, than trust in him not hurting Midoriya. It gives the decision different weight
- As someone with deep trust issues and a history with self loathing, i actually had to make myself really emotionally vulnerable to write this. I guess I'm showing trust in you guys by putting this out there. But it seems really important to both Midoriya's and Bakugou's and Mina's characters and i'd rather be the kind of author who takes risks. Mido's reason for hating himself is my reason for hating myself

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Two Heads Are Better Than One

Chapter by serenawitchwriter

Chapter Summary

Deku and Momo make a good team

Chapter Notes

you know, what's fun? having writing's block so bad that the Christmas chapter comes out nearly three months late. sorry for the wait

See the end of the chapter for more notes

If there was one thing Yaoyorozu Momo loved, it was giving presents. There was nothing quite as satisfying as figuring out the perfect gift, making it, and seeing the look on the person's face when she gave it to them. Creating things was just as fun as giving people things, and she could afford to be generous. Not just because of her quirk, but because her family was wealthy enough to afford the things she couldn't quite make. It just made her happy, and it made other people happy! There was nothing better!

Which was why she thrived during the holidays. She'd been planning the gifts she would be making her friends since school started. She'd been listening carefully to what they might want and planning ahead. She didn't need an excuse to make her friends presents, but gosh darn it she was going take it anyway!

Then she got the disappointing news that, since most of her classmates couldn't afford to give presents to everyone, they'd be doing a secret santa instead. Some of her classmates even discouraged her from giving presents to everyone, saying it would make them feel bad because they couldn't do it too. And she definitely didn't want anyone to feel bad...

So Momo would control herself and only make a present for the person she was assigned to.

She would give them the best present!

Midoriya wouldn't know what hit him!

When Midoriya opened his present for the class get together before break started, he burst into tears. Momo was more than a little concerned and self-conscious. Maybe she overdid it? She could admit that the enthusiasm with which she made Midoriya's presents may have been a side effect of her frustration at not being able to make presents for everyone but she had really thought he would like them.

Then he came over and hugged her and thanked her while still crying. So the secret part hadn't been entirely effective, but apparently he liked it.

She had made him action figures of all their classmates. She even made ones of himself, All Might's skinny form, and Aizawa. She was particularly proud of them because a lot of work and detailing went into them. She had actually made a ton more that she hadn't been satisfied with and thank god Christmas feasts were a thing, or she might not have been able to make them all. She'd even put them in little colored boxes with plastic windows on the front. She wished she could make those more detailed. But she couldn't really draw, not even when the design is literally being willed out of her body. Momo figured it was because her mind was structured wrong for it. She could study designs and patterns. She understood 3D modeling and sculpture better than anyone, but translating that on to 2D paper was a little more difficult. It always felt like she was working backwards, and for all her intelligence, it gave her a bit of a headache.

When he had pulled away, Midoriya gave here the warmest, most genuine smile she had ever seen. She had to admit it made her heart flutter a bit. "Thank you," he said, and part of her melted.

She could see some of her other classmates shooting jealous glances their way and she tried not to feel put out by it. She would have given them presents if she could.

The rest of the evening went well, at least. Momo, for her part, received a box of chocolates from Kaminari. After the gift exchange was dinner and that was considerably more exciting because everyone was assigned to bring a dish. Cooking was not one of her talents, so she

ended up volunteering to make the rice. Some of her classmates were disappointed that she didn't bring a dish from one of her chefs, but she argued that it wasn't in the spirit of the meal that they were having.

Some of her classmates' cooking skills truly shined. Sato and Bakugou were the obvious ones, both having been assigned to make the entrees. But Uraraka's side dish proved quite tasty, if under a budget, and Midoriya turned out to have a talent for baking as well. Iida turned out to be just as helpless as Momo, the same for Kaminari and Ashido. Kouda brought a plain plate of vegetables. Kirishima burned his dish but everyone could tell he did his best. Todoroki strangely enough just brought scrambled eggs. Apparently he only knew how to cook breakfast foods and he didn't want to be left out, even if it wasn't the most appropriate dish for Christmas dinner. Momo tried them and they were quite good for what they were, certainly more impressive than what she could make.

Throughout dinner, Momo kept catching Midoriya shooting her strange looks. After a while she started blushing, and soon after that, Uraraka nudged her friend, who got flustered and stopped.

Momo smiled to herself and went on to have a fantastic Christmas.

When they returned to school after break, it had felt like forever since she had seen all her friends. She'd missed her family and enjoyed being home, but they never achieved the level of enthusiasm her classmates had. It was nice to get back into the swing of things.

Classes started out with a bang, with another surprise lesson from Aizawa-sensei. They were becoming less surprising when he always seemed to set them when they returned from break or when they seemed to have let their guard down in some way. Momo often wondered why her other classmates acted so surprised. The lesson seemed obvious to her; Aizawa didn't want them to let their guard down at all, which was practical given their profession. But many of her classmates complained about rest and being normal for once.

A few of her classmates were getting more savvy to Aizawa's games, Midoriya, Iida and Todoroki among them, but then again, they weren't really the type to let their guard down in the first place. Momo wasn't sure if her classmates noticed, but Midoriya always seemed to be slightly defensive, even when he was relaxed. It was like he was waiting for a blow to fall. It was quite worrying. Todoroki had a similar tension, but Momo already knew the source of

that. She hated very few people in this world, but Endeavor was one of them. Iida, unlike them, didn't have an abused background as far as she could tell; he was just tense because it was in his nature to be tense. She respected the boy a great deal, but even she could admit he was something of a stick in the mud. He loosened up around his friends, but he was always very serious and very responsible.

The simulation was focused around being outnumbered, so they would be grouped three classmates against the rest of the class. The focus was more on escape than taking out enemies.

She got paired with Midoriya and Hagakure, and she was grateful for it. They both proved to be incredible assets through the assignment, Midoriya as their offense and Hagakure as their intel. Momo did her best to be their strategist, though Midoriya proved more helpful on that front, as she had anticipated. She'd noticed Midoriya's intelligence and analysis skills in the past, but he very rarely seemed to effectively use those skills on the field. It was a shame, really. She supposed he had trouble thinking under pressure and just reverted to 'punch it' in true moments of desperation. But that was what she was here for. She was going to take all the information they gave her and use all the ingenuity she could to make them the victors!

Momo's face was shadowed for a moment by the falling debris and her eyes widened. For a moment she completely froze up, fearing for her life.

Then a force slammed into her and she was back in the light again, Midoriya leaning over her, a intense expression on his face.

"Are you okay?" He asked.

"I… yeah," she said, feeling a blush rise in her cheeks. She was slightly winded, but uninjured. She was stupid for getting in the way. She shouldn't have frozen up. Oh god, if Midoriya wasn't there, she could have…

"We need to move," Midoriya said, still wearing his serious expression.

It took her brain a moment to catch up. “Right!”

And they ran for it.

A lot of her plans ended up falling apart the moment they entered the simulation. Momo tried not to be too upset about that. She had helped a lot, but Midoriya ended up being more of a leader than she was. She was determined not to fall back into another self-deprecating funk, but still, she knew she could have done better. She went in overconfident and they had suffered for it.

“Hey, Yaoyorozu-kun.” Midoriya said. He was still breathing heavily, and he was covered in scorch marks as he had inevitably gone toe to toe with both Bakugou and Todoroki. It had been terrifying to watch, and if Midoriya hadn’t come up with a way to pre-detonate Bakugou's sweat (a plan that depended on her and a box of matches, a plan that ended up seriously injuring Bakugou) they may not have gotten away. Bakugou had been a surprisingly good sport about being injured.

Hagakure ended up being the one to take out Todoroki, and Momo and Midoriya were both eternally grateful to her. After taking out the group’s tanks, escaping the cityscape became considerably easier, though Iida and Uraraka proved incredibly tricky. An unexpected challenge also came in the form of Shoji throwing Tsuyu at them. Midoriya had solved that issue by screaming the word ‘Salt!’ while getting tangled in the girl’s tongue, and it turned out to be an effective idea when Momo pulled a handful of salt out of her shoulder and threw it at them. Tsuyu cringed away at the taste enough to give Midoriya the opportunity to body slam her.

But Momo digresses. “Yes, Midoriya?” God, she was starving. She didn’t overuse her quirk, thankfully, but she felt like she could eat a horse.

Midoriya broke from the panicked mumbling that he had somehow started in the time it had taken her to respond. He jolted like he’d been caught doing something wrong, and then entirely too fast and blushing, he said, “I was wondering if you might want to hang out now that class is over and stuff! I understand if you don’t want to, I mean we never really talk or hang out alone. I actually don’t think we’ve gotten to know each other at all, but you’re nice and I wanted to-”

“I’d like that,” Momo said, startled. A blush was rising in her cheeks too. It was very rare for someone to approach her so earnestly. Most only approached her because they wanted something from her(quirk or social position). It was a bit nice that someone just wanted to hang out with her casually. “Could we perhaps go to the cafeteria?”

Midoriya nodded, quickly and urgently. He looked like he was about to be sick. *It’s a little silly* , Momo thought. Not an hour ago, Midoriya wore the expression of someone who could take on the world and win, and yet now, he looked like he wanted to spontaneously combust just asking to hang out with someone. It was one of his many idiosyncrasies.

Walking away to change out of her hero suit, Momo mused a bit. He was correct about them not being very close.

Despite having the same friend group and her being close with both Tsuyu and Todoroki, Midoriya had always seemed to be on his own level. It was hard to describe, really. It wasn’t that he ignored anyone, he seemed to make time for all his friends when they needed him, and he was unbelievably kind and warm.

But he always seemed to have his eyes on the future. It was hard to break into his headspace and talk to him because he was always busy with something. He always had some sort of plan in the works and he was always making helpful suggestions on how others could improve. He lived like he was dying, and while it was admirable in many aspects it was also intimidating and concerning. He should take better care of himself.

Meeting outside, Midoriya looked very anxious and he was receiving some rude catcalls from the other boys in class. He was blushing to his hair as Kaminari shouted, “Get it, Deku! Woowoot!”

“I-ignore them,” Midoriya said covering his face with his hands.

Momo tilted her head to the side slightly confused but dropped the subject. “So lunch?”

They ended up having a rather nice conversation about quirks on their way to the cafeteria. Midoriya started talking about ways she could improve her costume and Momo started making mental notes because they were incredibly practical. She felt a little embarrassed that she hadn't come up with them on her own.

While Momo loaded a lunch tray with food, Midoriya went off on an interesting tangent on how her quirk was similar to Fatgum's in a way, at least in how they metabolize food. It was absolutely fascinating.

"So," Momo said finally settling in at a table and digging in. "Is there something you wanted to talk to me about, Midoriya?"

The ease that filled Midoriya's body language when he talked about quirks vanished instantly and he started flushing again. Momo wondered if he had a fever.

"W-well, I know it might sound a little silly," he said not meeting her eyes

"I'm sure it's not silly," Momo said genuinely.

"I- uh- I mean, you know the secret santa thing…" Midoriya said blushing shyly. "I know it was just a present… but… well you went to a lot of trouble for me. No one's given me a present like that before so… I just felt… well..."

Izuku pulled a present out of his backpack. It was thin and rectangular and the paper was All Might themed. If Momo had to guess it looked like a picture frame.

"Happy late christmas, Momo," Midoriya said with a wobbly smile.

"Midoriya," Momo said feeling her own cheeks flush. "You didn't have to-"

“I know,” Midoriya said scratching the back of his head. “I just- it’s not much- I felt like… your present was so perfect… it’s the least I could do…”

“I… thank you.” Momo said deciding to accept the gift rather than argue further. Admittedly she’d seen the gift off Midoriya and Iida had gotten into (Iida was currently wearing a scarf that Midoriya had hand knitted for him. His brother had gotten a matching one). She understood that it would be easier to just take the present instead of hurting his feelings and making him escalate the present quality.

She accepted the present and carefully unwrapped it. As she had suspected it was a picture frame, but it was what in the frame that mattered.

It was a drawing of their entire class. She stared at it, taking in the details of everyone’s costumes, how everyone’s personality was captured in a few strokes of ink. Kirishima’s smile was almost too big for his face, Bakugou was scowling and glancing away from the viewer. Uraraka and Tsuyu had jumped in the air to match the height of some of the taller students. Jirou was grinning crookedly and twirling one of her ear-jacks. Even Hagakure's cloths were drawn in such a way that implied her bubbly enthusiasm. She had a flower crown.

In the center of the drawing Yaoyorozu was drawn far more beautiful than she felt. Tall and regal looking, a shy smile on her face. Midoriya was drawn towards the back, with tense posture and messy hair, nervous smile. That was perhaps the only flaw, he didn’t shine as brightly in the drawing as he did in real life. But everything else...

It was like someone had taken a picture of the class and condensed it down to all their best traits. It was perfect. In the bottom right corner Midoriya had signed his name.

“Did you draw this?” Momo asked finding she was crying with gratitude. No one had even done anything like this for her before. Everyone always said she was hard to shop for because she could make anything. Most of the time she’d receive food or money or something simple. No one had ever made *her* anything. And this was something she couldn’t make herself. She couldn’t draw, she could never recreate-

“Sorry, it’s not that good,” Midoriya said bashfully and Momo gave him an affronted look.

“It’s perfect!” She cried. “It’s the best present I’ve ever received. Thank you, Midoriya! Thank you so much. I-I don’t know what to say. Thank you!”

“Your present was better,” Midoriya said. “Yaoyorozu brand action figures. They’re one of kind.”

Momo smiled fondly. “You’re too kind. I could never make something like this. Thank you really.”

Midoriya rubbed the back of his neck but smiled genuinely. “...so, I have a question.”

“Yeah?”

“Does what you consume affect the efficiency and quality of what you can make or is it really as anything goes as it seems?”

Momo couldn’t help but laugh. He'll always be a quirk enthusiast. “I have noticed that the more I eat things with artificial flavors and dyes, the more colorful what I make comes out. I have to be acting with intent. But if I say eat a lot of cherry candy and make something red, it’ll come out a brighter red than if I don’t eat any cherry candy.”

Midoriya looked riveted and that was kind of exciting because Momo rarely got to enthuse about the finer details of her quirk. She often lost people when she started talking about things on a molecular level. She suspected that her quirk just wasn’t that interesting. But Midoriya seemed invested.

“Does that mean other things you digest effect what you make too? If you eat food with high amounts of iron does the metal things you make come out stronger? Can you eat and digest non food items safely? And will that affect what you make? Do you digest things differently?”

Momo smiled widely and started explaining metal alloys.

After that Momo felt closer and more comfortable around Midoriya. Admittedly she found it a bit amusing. He'd been rather obviously systematically befriending every one of their classmates. It felt kind of nice to be the subject of his attention, especially because he was so genuine about it. Momo had heard rumor that Midoriya had a dark manipulative streak but when it came to his friendships, he has been nothing but kind and caring. She really respected his ability to connect to people, even envied it slightly. He truly was a born leader.

He was also just fun to talk to. Momo knew she often bored people when she tried to speak to deeply about science, but Midoriya was incredibly passionate about knowledge and very knowledgeable about strange (at times random) topics. He wasn't going to be passing his math test with his apparently thorough knowledge of serial killers but it was still interesting to talk about.

Through Midoriya, Momo also felt like she was getting closer to her other classmates. Sero would often join them on their serial killer conversations and while he wasn't the best student either, he was almost as knowledgeable about horror topics as Midoriya. Todoroki also seemed happy that she was getting along with his friends and while he didn't say anything she still caught him sending soft smiles their ways when she and Midoriya were talking. Iida was also a more stable friend after this and while she considered him a close friend due to their shared positions on the student council, he'd always been rather professional with her and the work they'd do. She got the impression that he'd been holding her at arms length for some unknown reason, but now that she was closer to Midoriya he'd started to loosen up around her too.

She'd shyly mentioned it to Midoriya one time when they were studying and Midoriya in a low genuine tone explained, "I think it's because he was intimidated by you."

"Intimidated?" Momo repeated confused. "Why would he be intimidated by me?"

Midoriya blushed and twiddled his fingers. "It's just you're really pretty and kind and intelligent and polite and you come from a really proper family. Iida… he really respects you. I think he's shy around you because he doesn't want to fail your expectations somehow."

Momo glanced away, then frowned in a self-deprecating way. “...is that really the kind of person people think I am?”

Midoriya almost instantly looked panicked. “No! That’s not what i mean at all!” he said flailing his arms wildly. “What I mean is- Iida has really high standards, you know! Of himself and of the people around him and you meet like all those standards so when he doesn’t meet those standards he gets really down on himself and it’s not your fault. Though it isn’t really Iida’s fault either. It’s not that he doesn’t like you! we all like you! You’re really amazing!”

Momo felt her cheeks heat up and awkwardly stopped him from rambling further. “Well, okay than! I’ll- um- I’ll take that into consideration in the future.”

This was another thing that she seemed to get from her friendship with Midoriya. He was in the habit of showering people in compliments and meaning them. If he thought of something nice to say he would just blurt it out, far too honestly. Momo found it a bit embarrassing but also a really nice. She couldn’t help but try and believe him when he said nice things like that, because she knew he always meant what he said. It was really sweet, though at times it made her wonder if he knew her at all. A side effect of being quiet was that people rarely heard her thoughts and often assumed they were nicer than they were. Still, it felt good to be complimented.

She was glad both boys were starting to relax around her.

Sometime later she caught Midoriya sleeping on his laptop in the library. This was a problem she’d definitely started to notice more. If it had been evident before that Midoriya was a workaholic before, then being closer to him catapulted that awareness to dangerous levels. Midoriya had always been reckless with his health. If the rumors were to be believed it was because he hated himself, a rumor that Momo was mostly sceptical of. Midoriya had a special kinda spark in his eyes that spoke of passion and confidence. She didn’t really see how someone like him could hate themselves.

But the fact remained, Midoriya’s workload was unhealthy.

Momo prodded the sleeping boy lightly, saying his name until he started awake. He stared around the room wildly before settling on his computer and then her.

“Oh….hehe-hey,” he said sheepishly. Dried drool had made a track across his cheek and his hair was somehow even more wild. “Hey Momo.”

“Midoriya,” Momo said disapproval in her voice. “What is your sleeping schedule like?”

She’d chosen to cut to the chase and ask a rather direct question instead of something he could easily mumble his way out of.”

“It’s fine! It’s fine!” Midoriya said, slightly slurred and obviously still groggy. “I sleep when I can. It’s fine.”

“How many hours a night?” Momo kept her voice firm. It was what she called her vice president voice. The voice she used when she needed to be a stern leader.

Midoriya looked slightly puzzled for a moment and then said, “ummm… i dunno, three maybe four…"

“Four hours!?” Momo gasped. “Midoriya, a growing teen needs at least nine hours a night!”

“I know,” he insisted yawning slightly. “I know Iida says. I know. I just…”

He trailed off, tired mind clearly lost in thought, though he didn’t mumble. “Midoriya!” Momo snapped him to attention. Her brow creased with concern. “This isn’t healthy for you, especially with the amount of work you do. If you have insomnia you should she recovery girl and get medicated for it. You can’t perform at your best if you don’t get enough sleep.”

Midoriya’s expression fell and he looked rather like a kicked puppy. Even though Momo knew she was in the right, she still felt a pang of guilt at his pout.

“I know…” he said and with a start Momo realized he was more upset with himself than he was with her. “I just-” he gestured at the splay of papers around his laptop. On the screen Momo could see many tabs open. “It’s just I have so much work to do and I have trouble sleeping anyway so it’s better I get as much done as possible when I'm up. I’m fine, I swear.”

Momo chewed her lip considering the boy. “Midoriya…” she started. Then she shook her head and decided to try a different angle. “What all are you working on that’s more important than your health? It can’t all be school work.”

Midoriya looked anxious just then. “It’s..” he ran both hands through his thick hair. “It’s complicated. Look- I know my workload is insane. Y-you aren’t the first person to tell me that. And I’m trying to narrow it down. But I have so many different priorities and each one is as important as the other and I can’t abandon one for the other because the moment I do is the moment that the case I stopped working on becomes relevant again and then I’ve been caught off guard and if I had worked the other thing I wouldn’t be in the trouble but it’s all just so important that I can’t choose. I need to do this work or else something bad will happen and-”

“Midoriya,” Momo said taking the boy carefully by the shoulders. She wasn’t used to physical contact the way some of the other kids were but she’d muscle through the awkwardness for a friend. “Breathe.”

Midoriya took a deep breath and then another and another. Finally he started to look more calm and less like a wild deer thrown on stage and commanded to sing opera at gunpoint… that simile may have gotten away from her.

Momo offered him a shy smile, “Your problem is that you have to much work and trouble sleeping right?” she said and he stared up at her with wide, slightly dazed eyes. “Well the answer is obvious, isn’t it? You just have to ask for help”

“...huh?” and Momo would blame his cluelessness and blushing on the fact that he was still groggy and out of breath.

Momo spoke more insistently. “Your issue is that you’ve taken on to much of a workload all at once. Therefore if you asked your friends for help we can spread the work between us we can get more work done together and it will take the pressure your shoulders.”

“Oh.” Midoriya stared at her for a long moment eyes shining with a range of emotions and then abruptly burst into tears. Momo might have startled worse if she hadn’t seen Midoriya do this numerous times before. Still she worried until Midoriya smiled tearfully up at her. “You’re really smart, Yaomomo.”

Momo instantly found herself blushing at the use of her nickname and looked away flapping her hand in front of her face in an uncouth version of fanning herself. “Not at all, it was simple logic that anyone could do!”

“I didn’t,” he hiccuped and then laughed at himself. Then his smile dropped as he stared down at his laptop. “...some of the work I’m doing is private and only things that I can do…”

“Then we’ll help with everything we can,” she said pulling a seat beside Midoriya’s neglected chair. She flipped to a blank page in his notebook and grabbed a pen off the table. She clicked the pen eagerly. “Here, I’ll help you organize your thoughts.”

Midoriya smiled gratefully at her.

In a little under an hour, Midoriya’s wild schedule was delegated across the class. Midoriya’s research into the hero-killer copycat would be delegated to the other interns on the case, Tamaki and Kirishima. His Nedzu course studies would be assisted by herself, Iida and Todoroki. Midoriya seemed to have dissociated for a moment when she mentioned that Nedzu probably didn’t bar him from asking his classmates for help. After all, working with others to get more information and different perspectives is an important part of not only hero work but teamwork. Midoriya closed the tab on his computer for an article on mass murder, saying to quickly that he’d rather work on that one alone. Eventually they got to his case against Endeavor and Momo felt a chill run up her spine.

The case he had built was very compelling, though he only gave her an overview, not letting her see the actually file. He also admitted that the file wouldn’t do him much good until he got his private investigator license. The fact that he was getting such a license at all was news to her, but it still made Momo feel very small to see the lengths that Midoriya had gone to help Todoroki compared to her meager attempts at comfort.

Momo had know about Endeavor since slightly after the final exam. Having gotten closer to Todoroki, it was startlingly easy to put together the pieces on what kind of man Endeavor was. She didn't have the opportunity to talk to Todoroki about it until after Kamino Ward and All Might's retirement. By then, of course, it was too late and they'd be hard pressed to displace the current number one hero in such a tumultuous time.

But the way Midoriya was going about it was smart, if drastic. Despite her upbringing, Momo felt a mean and ugly smile pull at her lips.

"I'll be more than happy to help you with this one."

Chapter End Notes

me, successfully spelling idiosyncrecies right on the first try: silently screaming about that success and 'how did i do that!?' while my expression remains neutral
-midoriya is a bad influence an pure children. He blends in among them but has a sleeper agent naughty boy streak that super contagious.
-this one also felt more shippy than usual, especially with their classmates teasing. That wasn't really my intention but both characters were so pure that it was hard to summon any sort of negativity here. this isn't a ship fic though and it's not gonna be one.
-but guys, Tododekumomo only has 3 fics on ao3. One of them is one of my crack fics. This needs to change so i can read more of this poly ship. Guys. Write more tododekumomo. Do it. Please.

Discord:
https://discord.gg/SEkN8ee
Tumblr:
https://amarelibertius.tumblr.com

Teeth

Chapter by serenawitchwriter

Chapter Summary

Moonfish likes to see people smile

Chapter Notes

i don't know why i wrote this but i have a fever so things are gonna get weird. It's horror so be warned

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Moonfish liked children. They were soft, succulent, and salty. They were easy and fun to chase. They screamed shrilly, and it was music to his ears. As he got older, he looked for more of a fight. Adults knew how to battle. Heroes were lean and salty and so very nice to cook, even when gamey. He's had a few fat ones, slow cooked until the fat was falling off the bone. He didn't mind the gender so long as they had meat.

But there was nothing like a child.

As Moonfish sat and gave his last interview with a psychologist who studied the minds of villains, a glass wall between them, drugged and chained with quirk suppressants, he enjoyed staring at the guards. The psychologist was hardened. The guards should have been, but even they shifted when he stared at them. Moonfish enjoyed having people being afraid of him.

But the psychologist was asking questions, and it was only when he answered her that he got his muzzle taken off.

"Is there anyone you wouldn't eat?"

And Moonfish laughed. It was a mad thing. “Many,” he said. “There are poisonous people. Ugly and unappetizing. There are those who bested me in battle. They earned their freedom. And there’s always… *him.”*

Moonfish delighted in the way they chomped at the bit. Predictably curious. Most were. People found him fascinating, after all. He was unique. Strange in a way everyone was too afraid to be.

“Him?” the psychologist repeated.

Moonfish smiled with his too-large, jagged teeth. “I call him Little Green. He was a good boy. Would have been tasty, still had his baby fat and his skin was so pretty. Freckles. I love freckles.”

The guards looked sickened, and Moonfish leered enthusiastically at them. “You have freckles, don’t you, 005638?”

The psychologist cleared her throat, giving him a sharp look. If he had too much fun, they’d take him away. Moonfish slumped back in the chair he was strapped to and pouted irritably.

“Why didn’t you hunt him? And why Little Green?”

Moonfish smile reminiscing. “He had green hair, fluffy, and these big green eyes. He kept crying. It was a beautiful sound.”

“But why didn’t you eat him?”

“Patience, patience, doctor. Let me have my memories. You wanted to understand me, after all. How can you understand me if you don’t let me tell things at my own pace?”

“You lost your rights when you killed those children,” a guard growled lowly. He was a big one, bearlike. Literally. He had the head of a bear. Moonfish wondered if he tasted more like bear than human. It’s been a long time since he’s had bear.

The psychologist held up her hand to silence him. “Just answer the question.”

Moonfish hummed happily. He knew there wasn’t much point in acting out now, that his execution was tomorrow. He knew he probably wouldn’t get a second chance to escape. So he might as well have fun.

He wasn’t ready to die. There was so much undone, so much untasted. But he wasn’t afraid of death, either. Everyone died. He just hoped his meat wouldn’t be wasted. He tasted good, he knew. A scar on his calf telling that story. Though few asked. He was disappointed that no one asked.

“Fine, fine,” he said, wanting to kick his feet childishly, but he was too bound to do such a thing. “It was years ago. Probably seven? Hard to say when time doesn’t work in here.” Moonfish couldn’t gesture to the blank prison walls. But it was obvious to everyone that there wasn’t a clock in sight. “Little Green was young. Good and young, probably six or seven and scrawny. The run of the little, but that much easier to hunt.”

Moonfish licked his lips. “That’s one of the things I love about humanity. You all pack together like schools of fish, but the wimpy ones, the strange ones, are left behind to be the most vulnerable. It’s so easy to pick your outsiders off. No one cares about them, no one looks for them. I can just pick one up and no one will even turn back to look at me. It’s hilarious.”

The guards were angry now. Some even looked sick. They shouldn’t be this easy. Moonfish was certain he wasn’t the worst person here. The psychologist was proof of that, so guarded and unaffected. He’d love to break her.

“You speak about humanity like you aren’t part of it,” the psychologist noted.

Moonfish’s smile stretched a little more, “Do *you* think I’m human?”

The psychologist didn't reply. He hadn't expected her to.

"So anyway," Moonfish continued. "Little Green was one of the little ones. Easily taken, easily forgotten. I'd been stalking him for some time, and he was a bullied little thing. Brave, though, and clever. He knew where all the bullies were. Knew how to run. Might have been a real challenge to me, once we started proper. I think he noticed me a few times. Smart little thing."

"So one day, I decide to start the properly start the hunt. He was separated from the group. Bruised and bloody from them bully kids. Alone in the world. I could smell the blood. I couldn't resist, so I approached him. And do you know what he did? When he saw me? Do you know what Little Green did?"

The psychologist stared at him. The tension in the room was delicious.

Moonfish leaned forward as far as his restraints would let him. "He ***smiled*** at me." Moonfish let out a delighted laugh that was chilling to hear. "The little bugger smiled at me, like I was normal as could be. A perfect stranger. No fear in his eyes. I didn't look quite this bad back then, but I didn't look good. And he still smiled at me. It was amazing."

"You… liked it when he smiled at you?" the psychologist hesitated

"No one smiles at me," Moonfish said pointedly. "Never. But he did. Had nice teeth, too. I like teeth."

"Yes, we know," the psychologist said coolly. "You kept them as your souvenirs. Police found your stash."

"One of them, at least," Moonfish muttered. "But do you want to know something interesting, Doc?"

The woman gave him a blank look.

Moonfish sighed contently anyway. “Little Green's the reason for that. See, when he smiled at me, I decided something. Anyone who smiled at me would be safe. Didn’t matter how much work I put into them. If they smiled once, they were free to go. That’s why I let him go. I don’t think he even realized who I was.”

Moonfish sat back and smiled at the memory. “But no one ever does. Smile, that is. ‘Least not before they die. But with their teeth around, they can never stop smiling. It makes me happy.”

“Right…” the psychologist said, making one final nod before closing his folder. “I think that's enough. Thank you for speaking with me, Moonfish.”

“Yes, yes.” The man nodded as a guard approached with the muzzle. “Tell the executioner to smile at me.”

“I’m sure a lot of people will be smiling tomorrow,” the guard with the muzzle muttered darkly.

Moonfish couldn’t be more excited at the idea.

Chapter End Notes

I’ve mentioned before that I consume a lot of true crime media. I’ve watched interviews with killers before and researched a few cannibals. Still, I don’t entirely know where the idea for this chapter came from. sorry

Discord:
https://discord.gg/SEkN8ee
Tumblr:
https://amarelibertius.tumblr.com

One Bad Day

Chapter by serenawitchwriter

Chapter Summary

people asked for this :)

Chapter Notes

A bit less stand alone, read chapter 21-24, and chapter 32 for context

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Someone once said that all it takes to break someone is one bad day.

Katsuki knew this better than he liked to admit. The Kamino Ward incident continued to be the worst day of his life. All Might had helped and his fight with Deku had clarified things too, but Katsuki still looked back on that day with a mixture of disgust and guilt. It was a hard realization that he was bad enough that literal villains thought he could be one of them. His classmates had been calling him an asshole for a while, and Best Jeanist's confrontation with him about his behavior at the Sports Festival had stung, but nothing had hurt quite as much as being called out by the public for being the reason that All Might had lost his powers, of being a target because… because he wasn't heroic enough.

It left a bitter taste in his mouth, and even as he tried to get better, life would still throw gut punches at him. He'd failed the provisional license exam. He'd been put in quirk suppressant cuffs and almost lost his closest friend. He'd realized that his and Deku's relationship was more twisted and messed up than he'd ever thought. He'd… he'd been… he'd been a villain to Izuku. A real villain. He'd… he fucked something up in his head and it was all his fault. It was all on him.

It was bad enough realizing that he used to hurt Deku bad enough that he learned to disassociate from pain. It was bad enough that everything somehow blew up in his face and half the class still hates him. It was bad enough knowing that Deku fucking hated *himself* .

No, the heart of the issue was Izuku's forgiveness.

He… he kept helping Katsuki even though he didn't deserve it. He'd taken the torture, he'd stood up to Aizawa and prevented his expulsion, he'd reached out in that pit Cementoss put them in. He never stopped reaching out. Even when he should have, even when it clearly hurt him.

Katsuki couldn't understand it, and yet he still knew Deku better than anyone. It was strange seeing people learn Deku's creepy little habits and his messed-up history. It was almost sickening to recognize just how little their classmates seemed to know about him. They'd talked about it sometimes, Deku had mentioned that he was a 'late bloomer', that he didn't have any friends before UA, and he'd sometimes share his creeper stalker analysis notes. He'd shown how insanely reckless and suicidal he was. And yet people would look right past it and only see his bright smile and endless kindness.

They didn't seem to notice how little he was actually saying. Katsuki noticed. Deku didn't talk about himself. Personal information had to be drawn out. His friends would sometimes manage to get him to talk about his emotions, but it was almost always because the situation called for it. Emotional labor, or whatever the therapist called it. Most days Deku would turn the conversation back on his friends and learn more about them. Kirishima info-dumped his entire life story on Katsuki within a week of knowing him. He'd seen other kids pour their hearts out at the drop of a hat, but not Deku. No one seemed to get just how good the kid was at deflecting.

He'd said it himself; he didn't trust anyone enough to tell them everything. Deku was an honest kid, but there was so much left unsaid that it was hard to believe that anyone really knew him.

Even Katsuki…

He arguably knew more than anyone else. He knew about One For All. He'd known Deku longer than anyone. He'd seen Deku at his worst, and yet…

Some fundamental misunderstanding put a wall between them, a warped glass that twisted how he saw the boy to the point where Katsuki was uncertain that he knew anything at all. He'd been looking at Deku through the wrong lense for so long that it was hard to see him clearly.

Katsuki hated that uncertainty. They'd gotten closer. It was easier to talk to Deku without wanting to fight him and his stupid face. But still… Katsuki didn't understand him.

But…

He could still recognize that WHOEVER THE FUCK WAS SITTING IN HIS CHAIR WASN'T FUCKING DEKU!

"WHO THE FUCK ARE YOU!?" Katsuki screamed, glaring down at the imposter.

Fake Deku tilted his head to the side, looking identical to the boy down to the last freckle and scar. "Kacchan... it's just me."

Bakugou sneered. "Don't you dare try to feed me that bullshit. Are you that Himiko bitch? I'll fucking kill you!"

"Bakugou," Aizawa's harsh voice cut in, "as comforting as it is to know that you're observant enough to recognize if your classmates are different, that *is* Midoriya. He was hit with a quirk that switched him out with another universe's problem child. It should last about a week, so sit down."

Katsuki glowered at their teacher's words and glared at this wrong Deku for a few seconds longer. An ugly smirk twitched Deku's lip for a moment, but was quickly smoothed into something innocent and confused. Katsuki scowled harder but took his seat before Aizawa could repeat himself.

Having whoever the fuck this Deku was sit behind him was uncomfortable. For some reason, the nerd set his nerves on edge. His instincts were screaming *wrong* and *danger* . Showing him his back made Katsuki feel exposed. Like at any moment the kid was going to stab him.

No one else seemed to notice anything was wrong except maybe Aizawa, who shared a moment of eye contact with Katsuki before moving on.

The moment they had a free period, the new Deku was crowded by his friends and classmates. Questions about what was different about him and his universe were thrown out loudly all at once and Katsuki, half-turned in his seat, noted that this Deku was hunching and looking overwhelmed. He looked much like he had in middle school.

His answers were shy and quiet, but… careful. Katsuki noticed that his words were chosen very particularly.

“I think the biggest difference was that I never made it to UA.”

“Wah!?” Kirashima yelled, “But you’re the most heroic guy I know, and you have such a powerful quirk!”

Deku laughed, and it sounded like a missed note on a piano. Deku didn’t laugh like that. Not as far as Katsuki could remember. “Maybe in this universe,” he said. “In my universe, I was considerably less lucky, it seems.”

Disappointed and sympathetic noises sounded through the classroom, and they grated on Katsuki’s already frayed nerves. Supportive words were thrown around like empty promises.

“Does this mean we aren’t friends in your universe?” Round Face asked, helpfully for once. The sooner that Katsuki found out what was wrong with this Deku, the sooner he could crush him.

“No,” Deku answered easily. “I saw you on TV, though, and I even saw some of your more public fights live. You’re all really brave!”

“Aw! Other me doesn’t know what she's missing!” Round Face said, going to hug her friend. He flinched violently away, and Katsuki perked up.

“I don’t like to be touched,” Deku said quickly. It was more blunt and serious than Katsuki had ever heard him. He didn’t stumble on his words or apologize. Just sharp words. Something was definitely wrong.

It was at this point that some of the others started to notice that this Deku wasn’t as like theirs as he seemed.

“Sorry,” Round Face said.

Deku rubbed the back of his neck sheepishly. “It’s okay, I guess your Izuku is a lot more touchy-feely. There’s nothing wrong with that.”

Conversation continued from there, but Katsuki didn’t hear any more valuable information for the rest of the period. Deku was back to deflecting and asking about the others like always. If Katsuki didn’t know better, he’d say the kid recognized that he’d made people suspicious and was trying to smooth it over.

Glancing around, Katsuki ended up making eye contact with Round Face, Frog Girl, and Kouda. They all seemed to recognize that something was wrong.

The difference was this; when his mother told him that true heroes turn their backs on hatred, Midoriya couldn’t do it.

He couldn’t overcome his hatred or his pain. He tried, he truly tried. But the world was cruel and took too much from him.

So he started taking back.

During lunch, Deku avoided them. None of them knew where he went, but he seemingly disappeared into thin air.

Aizawa pulled Katsuki aside and just stared at him for almost a full minute before finally saying, “Be careful.”

Katsuki scowled angrily. “So you think something’s wrong too!”

Aizawa narrowed his eyes. “Something’s wrong. That doesn’t mean it’s what you think it is. I’m keeping an eye on him, so I'm warning you not to do anything rash.”

“I’m not an idiot,” Katsuki snapped defensively.

Aizawa arched an eyebrow but didn’t dignify that with a response.

“What’s the deal with him anyway? If he’s dangerous, why would you let him into class in the first place?” Katsuki said, glancing around. The hairs on the back of his neck rose, but he didn’t see anyone.

“He hasn’t proven to be dangerous yet,” Aizawa answered evenly. “He answered all the questions correctly and honestly. We don’t have a reason to contain him.”

Katsuki stared carefully at the man. “But you still don’t trust him.”

“No.” If nothing else, Katsuki appreciated his honesty. The blond didn’t have time to be coddled. “He’ll be watched carefully.”

“And if he makes a wrong move?”

“Then we’ll handle it,” Aizawa said shortly. “I’m warning you, Bakugou, we don’t know how dangerous he is. We don’t know how much damage he can do if we break whatever balance we’ve found right now. So, don’t engage. He could very well kill you if you aren’t careful.”

“Deku, kill me?” Katsuki snorted skeptically. “As if he could.”

Aizawa gave him a cold look at that, and Katsuki ended up sighing.

“Fine. I won’t intentionally pick fights with him. Happy?”

“Am I ever happy?” the man asked dryly, forcing Katsuki to silently acknowledge the sheer amount of bullshit the hero had to put up with because of them. He nodded in solidarity.

Then he was found. Renamed. Given a chance no hero dared to give him.

He became Shigaraki Mikumo.

And

he

bloomed.

The practical was a disaster. Katsuki still marvelled sometimes at how his favorite hero could be so fucking dense. Ever since it was revealed that Katsuki had bullied Midoriya, Aizawa had been keeping them apart. All Might, too, for a while. But now that Deku and Katsuki had

started to put things behind them, apparently All Might decided that was enough to start putting them together again.

Katsuki suspected that All Might had convinced himself that fighting each other would somehow speed up their ‘making up process’. Which was definitely something Katsuki’s therapist disagreed with. Apparently making every emotional confrontation involve fighting was unhealthy and would lead to worse long-term issues.

He was teamed up with Iida again. It was a test to see how they had grown from their first one. It had a similar set up, only this time Deku and Uraraka were the villains and he and Iida were the heroes.

Katsuki could admit that he had gotten better, not just in fighting, but in working with others. Iida still obviously hated him, but they were on polite enough terms to put together a plan. Katsuki could stand to listen to him, and if nothing else, he respected the fact that Iida had punched him. It had hurt, he should have been angrier about it, but he deserved it. Not enough people punched people when they deserved it.

Iida would be doing a quick run to find the bomb, taking advantage of his speed and mobility. Katsuki would hang back for a change and bring down the thunder when they did run into them. Katsuki suspected that Deku, especially this stranger Deku, wouldn’t expect that. He couldn’t afford to be predictable anymore.

Katsuki would crush them.

Then the test started, and things went to shit so fast that Katsuki almost got whiplash.

The thing was, Deku was apparently quirkless right now. Katsuki didn’t understand why All Might would let him fight like that, but the concern was waved away as ‘there will always be situations where one can’t use their quirk.’ Katsuki got the sudden bad feeling that this was a way of testing the other universe’s Deku. To see where his heart truly was.

That was also a stupid plan because apparently this Deku was fully ready to embrace the role of villain and do whatever he had to to win. And because he was quirkless, he’d decided that

he didn’t have to fight fair. He was the underdog here. He could afford to get scrappy.

Iida hadn’t even made it past the front door. Iida had looked for a tripwire, had kept an eye out for Uraraka’s floating debris above the entrance, but that wasn’t what he was hit with. It was a pitfall. The floor was, in reality, a hole, where the concrete that had made up the floor before was set together like a puzzle to look completely solid. The things that Uraraka floated usually stayed where they were unless you added momentum to it.

In this case, the momentum was Iida stepping on their little trap and falling through the floor. It would have been like a cartoon if not for the fact that it meant Katsuki was losing. Katsuki couldn’t help but marvel a little that they had the time to set this up. How had they even known they’d be coming through this entrance?

Katsuki asked Iida to confirm he was conscious. The only confirmation he got was All Might coming on the loudspeaker and saying Iida had been captured.

Katsuki chewed his lip. Looked like he was doing this alone after all.

Jumping over the hole, Katsuki made his way around the building with more caution, irritation thrumming at the back of his mind. Everything felt too quiet, he was barely restraining himself from charging around blindly, but something in his gut was holding him back.

He spotted Deku at the entrance of a larger room, eerily similar to the one Katsuki had blown up the first time they did all this. The difference was that this room was filled with boxes, looking like everything throughout the building was gathered here. Again, Katsuki marvelled at the time constraint they’d seemingly ignored to achieve this. Katsuki glanced around trying to spot Round Cheeks or at the very least see something levitated, but there was nothing. The girl was nowhere to be seen, possibly still returning from restraining Iida.

The moment Deku heard Katsuki he had rushed off into the stakes of boxes, running like usual, the fucking coward. At least the real Deku was growing out of that. Stupid other universe Deku was still stuck in old Deku’s cowardly habits.

Briefly, Katsuki considered just Howitzering the whole room again, clearing the boxes in one fell swoop, but he'd gotten chewed out the last time he did that and coasting by on his old moves wouldn't impress anyone. So instead Katsuki used his quirk to blast himself up so that he was standing on one of the walls of the newly-created box maze. He then proceeded to blow up the boxes around him at a more controlled downward angle. It wasn't as flashy as blasting everything away in a blaze of unhinged bloody glory, but it was methodical and it got the job done. What would be impressive is the hell he'll reign down once he chases the mouse out of its hole.

"You should be careful," a voice said behind him, and Katsuki whirled around, letting out a large explosion on pure instinct. Uraraka was blasted back, slamming into the opposite wall where she remained, floating and winded.

Katsuki sneered, ready to hit her with a follow-up blast when a voice from within the maze called up in the same tone. "She's right, you know. The bomb's in here, and if you set it off, you lose."

"Dammit, Deku!" Katsuki said, sending an unnecessarily large blast down towards where he'd heard the voice. When he turned back to where Uraraka had been to finish her off, she was gone. "Fucking shit!"

They could be lying, he acknowledged to himself. That kinda bluff would be the exact kinda bullshit Deku would pull. But hiding a bomb in a room full of basically everything was also a solid plan, especially if Katsuki did fall for it and destroy everything. If Katsuki had used his Howitzer, then Deku would have already won. The slimy fuck.

And unlike the maze in the final exam, this one didn't have an open section. It wasn't a neat, organized maze. There were stacks and piles of boxes clearly placed to make hollows and tunnels. If Katsuki

was going to search the place, he needed to get down on their level. Which was exactly what the two nerds wanted.

Katsuki took a moment to consider his next option. Surely they wouldn't put the bomb in one of the top boxes. Grinning ferally, Katsuki didn't take the time to question how effective it might be.

He let out a series of explosions, spinning in a circle and demolishing the top layer of boxes and revealing the tunnels underneath. Everything else was on fire. The heat was satisfying, as it would just make him sweat more.

Katsuki began to pursue the green blur now fleeing through the boxes, clearly frightened by the display of power. Bingo. Katsuki pursued Deku like a wild dog chasing a rabbit. He could win this.

Deku ran like hell, and he reached the corner of the room before Katsuki could catch up to him. He threw open a metal grate and it slammed shut when Katsuki skidded over. “Deku!” he shouted, reaching through the grate to grab at the boy or blast him before he could properly escape.

CRACK!

And Katsuki let out a scream of pain. When he’d reached through the bars, Deku had forcefully jerked Katsuki’s hand into the metal, too fast, with too much strength. The small bones in Katsuki’s wrist shattered from the impact, from his hand being bent in a direction it wasn’t supposed to go. And Katsuki fell away from the grate, cradling his broken wrist to his chest and seething with pain.

Before he could recover, white tape was thrown over him and Katsuki was suddenly bound. All Might announced the villain team’s victory and Round Face pumped her fist in the air and gave a small cheer. She had snuck up behind him, used his moment of distraction to capture him. That bitch.

She went and helped pull Deku out from the grate. He shot her shy, grateful little smiles, but Katsuki could see through him. His eyes blazed with smug victory no matter what his face said.

Katsuki’s wrist throbbed aggressively. He hadn’t expected it to be this painful. Deku was always breaking bones left and right without so much as flinching. Katsuki had known Deku had a high pain tolerance, but this fucking blew. What the shit. Katuski had broken ribs in the past and it hadn’t hurt this much. This was bullshit.

“Sorry, Kacchan,” the false Deku said, approaching him and rubbing the back of his head. “It was the best plan I could think of.”

Katsuki snarled and grabbed Deku by the front of his hero suit, dragging him forward.

Crack!

“MOTHERFUCKER! SHIT YOU MOTHERFUCKING BITCH COCK SUCKIN’ DICKWORM INFECTION!” Katsuki screeched when Deku broke his other wrist.

“Oops,” Deku said, sounding genuinely remorseful. He started waving his hands in front of him as he apologized. “Sorry, Kacchan. I mentioned that I don’t like being touched. This is kinda part of that. It’s an instinctual reaction. Are you okay? You should go to Recovery Girl.”

“Just fuck off!” Katsuki said. He was already making his way out of the flaming building, while mentally cursing. For a moment he made eye contact with Round Face, who was wearing an uncharacteristic frown. Yet again the *something’s wrong with him* look passed between them. She glanced away first, their distance after the truth serum incident preventing them from actually talking. It was so fucking annoying-- one mistake from a couple of years ago, and everyone was treating him like a criminal. More than they had before, even.

It was fucking stupid. He’d been fucking growing. Wasn’t that fucking enough for them?
He’s being fucking nicer!

All Might met them outside the building, his face abnormally grim. Katsuki’s stomach did a flip, but the look wasn’t directed at him. “The med bots are on the way to escort you to the nurse’s office, Young Bakugou.”

“I can walk on my own,” Katsuki said defensively, ignoring the fact that the way his hands were flopping forward made him look like a raptor.

“All the same,” All Might said when two robots with a stretcher appeared. Grumbling to himself, Katsuki sat down on the stretcher but refused any further indignity. “Iida should already be waiting for you.” All Might turned back to the villain team. “Young Midoriya, can I have a word?”

And there was a lot in that sentence. Disappointment, worry, concern, but most of all wariness. It was uncanny coming from All Might, number 1 of favoritism. Anyone with eyes could see that the hero thought Deku farted the fucking stars into the sky, but right now that look of dopey fatherly affection was gone.

“Of course, Yagi-san,” Deku said, looking sheepish even as All Might’s eyes narrowed further. They started stepping away in the opposite direction as Uraraka went back to the observation room.

As the robot carried Katsuki and his broken wrists away, Katsuki watched Deku carefully--glared, really. And for a moment, as though feeling Katsuki’s eyes on him, Deku turned back. Their eyes met.

There was no remorse there.

I told him,

“Life is about balance, Mikumo. For every light there is darkness. For every creation there is destruction. For every hero, there has to be a villain. Life has a way of making us a perfect opposite, a perfect enemy, and time moves like a wave. If there is peace for too long, war will inevitably follow. If the population grows to high, a plague evens the score.

“That is what we’re here for, Mikumo. We are here to even the score.”

Katsuki always had an eye on the news. He didn’t watch it religiously by any means, but he did pay attention.

In the days since Deku changed, there have been approximately nine unsolved murders. All of suspected or confirmed villains. They were the worst kind of people, child killers and pedophiles and rapists. People who were sadistic for the sake of being sadistic. People the public wouldn't miss. The League had been untouched.

A vigilante was suspected, but there were no witnesses, no evidence, no sign that a quirk was used. It bore a striking resemblance to some other cases. Police were going so far to attribute it to a sudden escalation from Stain's copycat killer. On the third day, a hero notorious for being pond scum was killed and very few tears were shed. This seemed to confirm in people's minds that it was him.

But Katsuki had a gut feeling.

His hands were still bandaged. Since his hands were his money makers Recovery Girl was being more careful in how she healed them, keeping a closer eye on them. Katsuki appreciated the why but was still endlessly irritated by the situation. He'd just gotten the suppressant cuffs off, and now he was stuck not using his quirk for another week.

Katsuki remembered that look in the nerd's eyes. The coldness. The nerd may have been acting to the best of his useless, quirkless ability, but he hadn't been afraid of Katsuki. Something was wrong with him.

He watched Deku carefully. His paranoia had jumped rather high at this point. Deku's closer friends were worried, too, but they were worried in a way that made them close ranks around him. They were acting more protective. They were mothering him.

It was almost funny. On one hand, this Deku definitely needed mothering. He barely ate, was constantly reading on his phone or taking notes on the tablet Nedzu had given him. He was clearly isolating himself, pulling away from casual touching and from offers to hang out. He didn't look healthy and having his friends fret over him, at least, ensured that he was eating and not injuring himself.

On the other hand, it was clearly driving Deku crazy. He'd said from the beginning that he didn't like being touched, and Katsuki's injury was proof enough. The nerds kept reaching to

ruffle Deku's hair or nudge him and stopping themselves. It was very clearly making him paranoid, like the threat of being touched was as dangerous as actually being touched. He was also clearly not used to just having people there, near him, talking to him, worrying about him. Katsuki had compared it to middle school Deku before, and he honestly didn't like thinking about how different middle school Deku was to the Deku he knew now.

But it fit. It's like the Deku from the past had been thrust forward into this universe and was thrown into the deep end of friendship.

The only real difference was that instead of simpering and giving them looks of doe-eyed gratefulness, he was giving them the look he gave the kids who used to trick him in middle school. The kids who in their bullying went so far as to pretend to be friends with the nerd to intentionally rip the carpet out from under his feet.

Katsuki had never liked that cruel manipulation. He'd never found that funny. There was something incredibly underhanded and gross about tricking someone's emotions like that. Katsuki had at least always been honest in his hatred. Direct in his bullying.

Katsuki saw the confrontation coming a mile away, but he still wasn't prepared for it.

"You can stop pretending," Deku muttered lowly while they were in the dorm kitchen preparing snacks. It was only due to Katsuki's hyper-vigilance that he heard him from the couch. He saw the Deku squad tense.

"We're not pretending," Uraraka said, no hesitation, no doubt or lie in her voice. She had a way of speaking with such certainty that Katsuki had always respected. She was honest in her dislike of him and had also threatened to send him into orbit if he ever hurt Deku again.

Katsuki wondered if that was what happened to Mineta. The school had panicked rather dramatically about it, and only the news that he'd somehow ended up in Russia with amnesia seemed to break the backlash. The pervert hadn't been on school grounds when it happened and it was assumed he'd run afoul of some quirk user in town. Given the disgusting way he treated women, Katsuki wasn't overly surprised that he offended someone. He wouldn't blame Uraraka for yeeting him as far as she could either.

Katsuki, personally, wasn't going to mess with that. He, unlike some people, had some survival instinct.

Deku gave her a dead-eyed look. "You might not be pretending to like the other Deku. He has a quirk. He's a hero. But you have no reason to like me, and you know it."

That caused a sudden uncomfortable tension to spread through the group.

"Y-you don't think we only like you because of your quirk, right?" Uraraka stuttered. The others in the group clambered to express their outrage and defense and comfort. It was loud and almost sweet how fast they were to cry that they loved and cared about him.

Deku's expression turned cold, distant but he was still smiling. How could he still be smiling with that kind of look in his eyes? "You don't know that," he said. "You don't know me. You only know your other Deku and are making assumptions because of it. That's not fair to either of us."

"But Deku--" Uraraka began.

" *Don't call me that,* " Deku grit out. Uraraka had fallen back into the habit of calling him Deku not long after the truth quirk incident. Still spinning it as Dekiru. This Deku didn't appear to know her bright spin.

Uraraka fell silent.

"Midoriya," Iida said, drawing up to his full height. "Pardon me for being blunt, but if you're so different, why haven't you given us the opportunity to get to know you? Even if you aren't the same, we would all still like to be--"

"Don't," Deku said harshly. "Ingenium, I know you're trying to help and be fair. But has it occurred to you that I'm not trying because I don't want to be friends with you?"

“I-Ingenium?” Iida stuttered.

Frogface put a finger to her lip. “So you’re done pretending to be nice?”

Her blank stare gave nothing away. Deku’s eyes narrowed at her for half a second before he pulled his hands down his face and groaned. “I’m tired,” he said equally bluntly. “I just want to be left alone until everything returns to normal.”

The friends exchanged looks. Icyhot was shooting Deku the most piercing look.

“Oh.” Uraraka wilted. “Oh, okay, we’ll leave you alone.”

Deku didn’t look at her, turning and going back to preparing his dinner. His friends wandered out, all muttering to each other and looking worried. Icyhot was the last to leave, still staring at his friend with a pensive expression.

The number of murders increased after that.

Katsuki knew why.

“Tomura will burn the castle down and you will rebuild from the ashes.”

“You will become the gods of this earth.”

And they did.

The plan had been to confront him as he snuck out. Katsuki was sitting just outside the dorms, out of sight if anyone looked out, but still able to see Deku's dorm window. Katsuki knew that if he was caught out here, Aizawa might literally kill him. He'd been warned specifically against having this kind of confrontation. He'd been warned that this Deku was dangerous and tricky. Katsuki's palm was still in a cast.

But he was a hero, and heroes didn't just leave things alone.

Deku had come down from another dorm room. It was almost clever, and far less likely to get him caught. There were plenty of empty dorm rooms to hide in. Deku was also wearing all black and a hood, making it far more difficult to recognize him. He blended into the shadows and deftly avoided the cameras and patrol robots. If Katsuki hadn't been looking for him, he wouldn't have seen him.

"Deku," he said lowly and the boy tensed, whirling around to glare at him. The angry look didn't fade when he realized who he was looking at.

It was then that Katsuki understood that this kid was the furthest thing from his Deku as possible.

In all the years that Katsuki had known him, through bullying and fighting and just normal childhood friendship, Izuku had never looked at him like that. Ironically, it was in this moment Katsuki fully understood that Izuku had never looked down on him growing up. Izuku had never hated him or pitied him. Because in all that time, this look had never crossed his face.

"Kacchan," the Deku said, smiling sickly sweet. "W-what do you want?"

The stutter was fake and mocking, and they both knew it.

"Don't play games with me," Katsuki said shortly, feeling a sudden rush of anger and fear. "You've been leaving at night all week and there just happen to be a new series of unsolved

murders that intentionally disable quirks? What are you playing at?"

"K-Kachan, I have no idea what you're talking about," Deku stuttered pathetically. Still faking it. "Me? Commit murders? How could I? I'm a hero student. And UA's security is supposed to be infallible, right?"

" *Deku!* "

"Oooh, so scary," Deku pretended to shake in fear even though his lips were twisted up into a smile. "You don't really expect anyone to believe you. In this universe, I'm the next coming of All Might. And even if you pointed a finger there won't be any evidence. Because *I* haven't done anything."

Katsuki bared his teeth. "Do you think I'm stupid, or something? You can't lie to me, *Deku* ."

Deku stood up straight and tilted his head to the side. "I'm not lying and I *do* think you're stupid."

Katsuki startled at the bluntness. "YOU *BASTARD."*

"Quiet down, idiot," Deku said, eye twitching in irritation. "It's bad enough that you followed me out here. You're really nosey, aren't you?"

"Deku," Katsuki said again.

"Stop calling me that," Deku said coldly.

"What are you going to do about it, *De-ku* ?" Katsuki said sneering and looming over the boy. Deku gave him an unimpressed look.

“You really aren’t worth the time I'm wasting on you,” he sighed. “Go inside. Mind your own business. You’ll live longer.”

“ *Tch* .” Katsuki crossed his arms over his chest. “You think I'm just gonna drop this? You’ve pretty much confessed to murder and you expect me to walk away. I should arrest you.”

Deku rolled his eyes dramatically. The smile kept his lips turned further upward, and it was starting to get unnerving. “I haven’t confessed to anything. I haven’t touched another soul.”

“Then what are you doing out here, Deku?” Katsuki said leaning forward, trying to intimidate him like he did when he was younger. A heavy unease had been settling over him for the entire conversation even as he tried to keep them on the normal script. This Deku was so annoying. Why couldn’t he just act like normal Deku?

“Minding my own fucking business, for one,” Deku said mockingly, still smiling sardonically.

“What do you think you’re playing at? Being vigilante? Going rogue with Deku’s body? Did it occur to you that anything you do will be blamed on the real Deku?”

Deku snorted, face twisting in an ugly way. “If I didn’t know any better I'd say you were worried about me.”

“Yeah, I make it my business to keep an eye on potential serial killers,” Katsuki sneered.

“It’s not like any of the targets are a great loss to society. Given what I know, from my world, their death will actually make things easier for all of you moving forward,” Deku said, eyes glinting ominously in the moonlight. “Not that I’ve done anything about it. Obviously. I’m just saying those dregs, those future killers, are getting what’s coming to them.”

“ *You!”* Katsuki snapped. “What the fuck is wrong with you?”

“A lot, probably,” Deku said dryly.

“ *Deku!”* Katsuki said, working into a mild froth. “Don’t you understand what you’re doing? I don’t care what kind of scumbag you are in your other world, you can’t just come here and ruin our Deku’s life! If you put blood on his hands, it’ll fucking destroy him.” Katsuki took an intimidating step forward. “So I ask again, *what the fuck do you think you’re doing?”*

Deku stared at him for a long moment, eyes wide but not nearly as expressive as normal. It was like that time Icyhot encased him in ice and all he could see was foggy white. His eyes lacked the warmth, passion, and character Katsuki was used to.

“You’ve changed,” he said slowly. Then he let out a laugh that was halfway between relieved and unhinged. “You’ve actually changed? Oh, that is too rich. Good job! Bravo!” he pretended to applaud.

“Grrr,” Katsuki’s growled, lip twitching like a dog baring its teeth.

Deku just looked amused. “I guess out of respect for this world’s Deku’s hard work, I'll let you live…”

“Like you could kill me,” Katsuki snapped automatically. Later he would wonder how he could be so stupid.

A smile like cracked ice split Deku’s face in half. Wider and more deranged. It was starting to freak Katsuki out that Deku never stopped smiling even as he clearly went through different dark emotions. “Kacchannnn,” he said in a horribly mocking playful tone. Like he was speaking to a toddler. “I’ve already *killed* you. In my world, you lost.”

Katsuki felt the air leave his lungs all at once, like being punched in the chest, even though neither of them had moved. “You wouldn’t,” he hissed breathlessly.

Deku's laugh was like breaking glass. "I don't know about your *Deku* , but I certainly would." He paused, eyes turning briefly pensive. "You hurt me a lot."

Kacchan clenched his fists, the familiar anger rising up like fire in a furnace. The urge to fight, to scream, to destroy anything that stood in his way despite the growing pressure. It was the fire to this Deku's endless ice. Defensive and insecure, it was also the voice in his head that was still telling him he deserved to suffer. That it was his fault that Deku was like this. That it was his fault that All Might fell. It was battery acid in his throat.

An explosion was aimed at Deku's stupid smiling face before he could think, bandages be damned.

And just as quickly, he was gone.

A knife was suddenly pressed against Katsuki's throat. Katsuki hadn't seen him move. Fear was gasoline on his angry fire but he stood completely still. His wrist screamed in pain.

"I remember the exact day it happened, Kacchan. The smell of your blood mixed with smoke and burnt flesh. I didn't want to kill you. Just make you suffer. Just show you what it feels like to be quirkless. *Useless* . You can't really set off your explosions without the igniters in your palms... You would have lived fine, just a useless, quirkless, scarred nobody. A pebble on the side of the road."

Instinctually little sparks and puffs of smoke came off Katsukis hands, burning his bandages.

Deku giggled. "You wouldn't have died if you weren't so stubborn." The knife pressed closer, drawing blood. "The real irony is that you weren't stubborn enough to live. If you had kept it together, if you had just controlled your *goddamn temper,* then maybe there would have been someone left to stand in my way." The knife pulled back, and Deku let him go. "You always were the only one who could read me."

Turning and backing away, all too aware of the anger rolling off the villain like mist off dry ice, Bakugou stared at the boy who in another world, in another lifetime, had been his friend. The bitterness in his eyes was positively frigid.

“Everyone else…” Deku said, and there was something like sadness in his voice even as lips still pulled into a facsimile of a smile. “They’ve never looked past the mask…”

Bakugou breathed hard, a bead of blood trailing down his neck. “ ***You’re not him,*** ” he said with force, the smiling happy-go-lucky nerd rising in his mind. Too utterly different for this Deku to even get close. All those little moments of cheering him on. All those little challenging glares. The damn muttering. The way he understood what he was thinking without words. “ ***He’s better than you!”***

Deku hummed thoughtfully. “I think we can both agree on that.”

And the note of sadness was more real and solid than before. There was something like longing in his voice.

“You’re jealous?” Katsuki accused, confused.

Deku played with his knife, the tip drawing blood from his finger. “Why wouldn’t I be? He has everything that I wanted. He’s everything that I could have been.” His rueful laugh sounded insane. “A dream come true.”

He looked small, Katsuki realized. It was a strange thing to notice, hard to explain. Katsuki remembered in middle school when Izuku would stand between him and a victim with a blazing look on his face. And even back then, there was something… bigger about him. Even when he was stuttering and crying and flinching, there was something larger than life about him. Something like All Might. After joining UA, that aura has been growing and burning brighter and brighter.

But this Deku just looked small. Empty, even.

“What happened to you?” Katsuki asked. *Why did you give up?* was what he meant.

And for a moment, the cold hatred dropped away from his eyes to… to desolation. An empty tundra.

His smile dropped away completely for the first time.

"I…" he stopped himself, seemingly thinking about what he was going to say. "There's a saying, that all it takes to break a man is one bad day…" Deku turned and stared out into the night. "But what qualifies as a bad day is different for everyone." He looked back at Katsuki. "For me, a bad day isn't suffering. I'm constantly suffering. Pain is normal. I'm used to it."

Katsuki didn't doubt it, though the thought made him feel sick. His hand throbbed as a grim reminder of the kind of pain Izuku put himself through on a daily basis just to use his quirk. He still remembered their torture session with the fruit loop. How Izuku never screamed. For *hours* …

"A bad day for me," Deku went on, expression more like his Izuku, but still smaller, emptier. "Is exhaustion. I've been fighting every day of my life since I was four years old. To survive, to overcome, to be kind. *A hero turns their back on hatred.* It's exhausting. It was so fucking tiring to fight everyday. To resist that voice in my head, outside my head, from you, telling me I'm better off dead. Do you have any idea how tempting it is, Katsuki? Do you have any idea how hard it is?"

Katsuki licked his lips. The pressure in his chest was making it hard to breathe. It'd been present ever since Deku said he killed him. He wanted to keep exploding. To make this fake Deku a smear on the pavement. But the tension was too high. It almost reminded Katsuki of Kamino Ward, when he stood in the presence of All for One. Izuku didn't have the same murderous aura, his presence didn't crash down on him like a suffocating blanket, but there was that instinctive feeling. The sense that this predator was one twitch away from striking.

"No," he confessed. Despite knowing the taste of self-loathing, death had never been on the table for Katsuki.

Deku shook his head, unsurprised. "I was fighting like a veteran, Kacchan. I've been drowning in this for years, and it was all I could do to keep my head above water. A bad day for me means sinking under. A bad day for me means never rising to the surface again."

Deku's eyes shined, the first sign of tears he'd had since coming here. "It's scary… knowing that all it takes to die is one bad day."

"You could have asked for help," Katsuki said, unwillingly. It hurt to push the words past his throat. He already knew the answer, so why did he ask?

"Ask who?" Deku said in an aggrieved voice. "My mom, who cries and apologizes for giving birth to me? A teacher, who dismisses or gaslights me? You? I was alone, Kacchan. You made sure of that."

"...A hero?" Kacchan tried weakly. It was getting harder to take breaths into his chest with the pressure in the air around them. He hated it. He hated it, but he couldn't move. He was frozen. Frozen like Deku's eyes.

Deku tilted his head to the side, and that horrible smile returned to his face. He reached out his scarred hand to touch Katsuki's cheek, expression patronizing. "You haven't learned yet, Kacchan? All heroes do is disappoint you."

The moment he made contact, Katsuki was broken from his stupor. He flinched back and pushed the villains away with a blast of his quirk. Deku stumbled back but didn't react with any sort of pain. If anything, he seemed amused. A light in the dorm building turned on after what was probably the third loud noise they had heard in the night.

"That's my cue to leave," Deku said, backing off and heading towards the wall that encompassed the grounds. "See you around, Kacchan. I'm glad you've been growing up."

Katsuki watched him vanish, complicated feelings crashing down all around him and utterly destroying his ability to think. he mutely watched as the villain that had been his childhood friend left. He felt utterly sick as the world began to spin wildly around him, as he thought about how that could have been his Izuku. He could have become a villain-- Katsuki could have died-- he could have died just now-- Deku was- Izuku was…

He couldn't breathe.

Aizawa landed roughly beside him, the look of fury on his face melting to concern as Katsuki completely blacked out.

So my question for you, Midoriya Izuku, is if you want to do the same?

Do you want to be a god, Izuku?

Are you willing to take back everything the world has taken from you?

Katsuki woke in the infirmary and felt like shit. When Recovery Girl told him he had a panic attack, he felt worse. Eventually, after more arguing than was probably needed, Katsuki found out that he was in a shit ton of trouble and that Deku was missing.

Katsuki went quiet, his confusing conversation playing through his head on loop. He'd never felt so helpless before, even in Kamino. That had been different, helpless, humbling even, but that had been against a villain who could defeat All Might. It hadn't hurt the way this did. It was just another villain like so many others they'd all faced. It wasn't personal.

This *was* . It was like this Deku had reached into his soul and started cutting all the threads that held him together. Katsuki was collapsing inside and he couldn't do anything about it. Because it was his fault. Because he'd made Deku. Because this was what he deserved.

It hurt.

In another life, he'd made a villain. One that couldn't be stopped because he'd been too stupid and weak to survive. Izuku, his former best friend, the boy who wouldn't hurt a fly unless it hurt someone first, had somehow become that-- that *monster* .

He'd known he'd hurt Izuku. He'd known he'd made horrible mistakes when he was younger, when he was more arrogant and insecure and threatened. His hands, still bandaged, still aching, had burned his friend. For fun. Because he was irritated. Because he needed an outlet. Or because he needed to practice his quirk. Or because Izuku looked at him with those sad fucking eyes.

It had never been in pity. Katsuki kept getting stuck on that. That sad, wide-eyed, watery look. That bold burning look was never judgement. Katsuki no longer knew what those looks were. But it hadn't been pity.

He'd been blind.

He'd been so fucking stupid.

What the fuck is wrong with him!?

"Bakugou--" Aizawa said stepping into the room with the air of a man on a mission. He was fully prepared to chew the boy out but stopped, startled. "You're crying?"

What? Katsuki touched his face and his fingers came back wet. What the fuck? Katsuki didn't cry! That was Dek- Katsuki never cried.

Why couldn't he stop?

Aizawa licked his lips and stood awkwardly beside the bed. The teacher wasn't looking at him, as though wanting to preserve his dignity. "Do you--" The teacher paused. "Is there anything you want to talk about?"

Katsuki's thoughts were blank for a moment. Nothing but ringing silence. Like using his largest explosion and going temporarily deaf. That familiar needle of tinnitus in his eardrums.

There was a world outside of that silence, but it was out of his reach.

Katsuki's hand was still in front of him, bandaged, aching, fingertips wet with tears. The hand that he had used to hurt Izuku countless times.

"Have I saved anyone?" he asked, in a raw voice. It was a rare moment of vulnerability. It was the question he'd been asking himself since his first midnight fight with Izuku all those months ago. "Izuku already has a whole laundry list of people he's saved… and I can't think of anyone. I've defeated villains, I won the Sports Festival and came in first during the entrance exam. But I haven't…"

The boy bit his lips, tears still streaming unwillingly down his face. Aizawa didn't say anything. He just put a firm hand on Katsuki's shoulder. Grounding him. It was a small comfort that hurt his pride to accept.

Katsuki sniffed, feeling pathetic and disgusting. "I keep hurting people. I keep being the reason people get hurt. All Might, Best Jeanist, Izuku… because of me… why am I like this? What the fuck is wrong with me? Because of me *that Deku* -"

"You have nothing to do with how that other Midoriya acted," Aizawa interrupted in a no-nonsense tone. "He wasn't our Midoriya. His Bakugou wasn't you. You can't blame yourself for the actions of someone in another world."

"But it *is* me! Don't you see-- I could have-- *he almost happened* . If Izuku had been weaker… he could have…" Katsuki was filled with a pent up energy that he was struggling to control. He wanted to attack, to release it, to burn, but the person he was most upset with was himself. He almost wanted to punch himself. Beat his head into the wall as punishment.

Aizawa's hand squeezed Katsuki's shoulder firmly, strong enough to be almost painful, but it kept him stable. "But he didn't."

Aizawa always spoke bluntly. No doubt or room for argument.

Katsuki closed his eyes, ignoring the fact that he was having a full emotional breakdown in front of his teacher and just trying to breathe.

“Bakugou,” Aizawa said, getting the boy to look at him. “ *He didn’t.”*

Katsuki’s eyes fell back on his bandaged hands. “He didn’t,” he repeated, feeling very little comfort in the words.

They stood in contemplative silence for a long moment as Katsuki tried to compartmentalize like his therapist had been teaching him.

“I want to get better,” he finally admitted. “I want to be the best. How do I fix this?”

Aizawa’s eyes suddenly lit up, not with his quirk but with… relief?

“Well, to start, you can stop treating people as stepping stones. You’ve gotten better about treating your classmates as equals, but you still seem to look down on civilians and strangers who are weaker than you. Worth isn’t determined by strength alone. You could also stand to be more personable. Charity might help. A few weeks in a soup kitchen might teach you a thing or two about how ‘weak’ these strangers are. Show you how good you have it too. I know Best Jeanist made an attempt by throwing you at some kids, but if kids don’t give you a reason to sympathize with them, they can just be annoying. Seems less helpful in building empathy.”

Aizawa went on for some time, as though he’d been building this list in his head for a while. Katsuki stared at him. The help, the lack of judgement or pity seemed unreal. He wasn’t being yelled at or admonished. Aizawa was just laying the facts out in front of him like always.

Slowly Katsuki began to relax. He could change. They had a plan. They could take action.

“Really, I'm fine!” a familiar voice said. The boy and teacher turned towards the door of the infirmary. “I don’t know what happened or even how I ended up out there. I guess we switched back? But really, I'm not injured!”

“Izuku!” Katsuki said automatically.

The green-haired boy jumped but his face lit up with familiar smile. The one that made him seem bigger than he was. “Oh! Kacchan! W-what did you call me?”

Katsuki took a moment to drink him in, too relieved to be ashamed. It was his Izuku, All Might’s successor, the sunny idiot who didn’t know when to give up. He was healthy, stronger, overwhelmingly bright. His eyes were lit with that familiar warmth and kindness. Concern…

Was that what it had been all those years ago…?

“You’re crying!” Izuku cried, alarmed.

Damn it. Fucking stupid leaky eyes. Being fucking bullshit.

“Kacchan, are you alright? Did the other me do something? Your hands! What happened? Are you okay? Can I help? Is there--” The familiar string of rambling escaped Izuku’s mouth in an instant and didn’t show any sign of stopping.

Katsuki chuckled and Izuku cut himself off, immediately flushing and apologizing and waving his hands animatedly. It was so familiar it was comforting. Katsuki had a feeling it would annoy him tomorrow when he was over whatever emotional bullshit affliction this was. But for now, he found a new appreciation for the nerd. Gross.

“Will you just shut up already?” Katsuki said, trying not to grin. “I’m fine.”

“Oh.” Izuku abruptly stopped panicking. “Okay, that’s good. Are you sure though? You don’t normally cry, and your hands--”

“It’s fine. Now get checked over by Recovery Girl already so we can get out of here.”

“Right!”

Aizawa left, probably to return to the dorms. If Katsuki knew anything, All Might was probably on his way to the infirmary to check on his protegé. Recovery Girl stepped out for a moment to get something from her office, and things went quiet. Izuku settled into the bed beside him.

“I was wrong, you know,” Katsuki said suddenly, muttering almost too quietly to be heard if not for the silence of the infirmary. “About you being useless.”

“What?” Izuku seemed startled.

Katsuki rolled his eyes. “You’re not useless, Izuku.”

Izuku burst into tears, the kind that could flood the room, but he was genuinely touched, whether it was because of the words or because Katsuki had used his real name for the first time in years. Either way, the boy was a sobbing mess by the time Recovery Girl returned and gave Katsuki a disapproving look. All Might had arrived not a moment later and basically took over caring for the crybaby. Recovery Girl finished healing his hands and sent Katsuki on his way.

Katsuki let out a breath when he stepped out of the room. For a moment he allowed himself to smile.

He’d get better.

He'd make it so Izuku will never become *that Deku* .

If all it took was one bad day to make a villain, then he'd just have to make sure those bad days didn't happen. Maybe that's what it means to be a hero.

Katsuki burned with determination. It was as lofty of a goal as being number one, grander even. But he'd do it. He'd make sure no one would have to have that 'one bad day' again.

He'd save everyone.

You still have a choice, Izuku…

Chapter End Notes

So we finally got a villain Deku chapter. This one took a while to get right and I'm sorry for the slow updates, but I've been tapering off writing this to focus on other fics. I'm going to continue writing this, it just won't be on a regular update schedule.

So many people asked for full villain Deku as though i wouldn't make it angsty. And even with this I'm still being cagey with it :)c
I wonder why...

Bravenwolf, a frequent commenter and discord friend, also left multiple comments wanting Bakugou to get his hands broken for some reason? So i delivered. I hope you're happy, my friend.

If you're wondering how Deku was getting away with murder, he basically contacted and met with Godeye to give him a list of names. That's why Godeye was being blamed and Izuku could safely say he hasn't hurt anyone, this might come up later

Discord:
https://discord.gg/SEkN8ee
Tumblr:
https://amarelibertius.tumblr.com

Update

Chapter by serenawitchwriter

Chapter Summary

updating you on the future of this fic

So it’s been three years since me and a group of friends first published this series. And it’s been almost 2 years since its last update. In that time, the friends I started this with fell off the project, leaving me as the main writer. Back then I had a lot of plans and a lot more time to write and as is often the case, time has changed a lot for me.

As it stands, the main reason I stopped writing this fic was that I got stuck and was waiting for inspiration to strike or a solution to make itself known. That hasn’t happened. And since then canon has considerably changed, making it more difficult to get into the same headspace I had writing this two years ago. It’s unlikely that this story can continue in the way it was originally written.

So where does that leave us?

Well, as it stands I have about thirty half-started chapters and chapters I'd planned to write but didn’t. It would be a shame to let that work go to waste, so what I'm going to do instead is write bullet point outlines for the stuff I haven't written yet, and let you read what is there. That way you still get the story, albeit in a less complete way. I hate leaving things unfinished so I will do my best to bring this to a satisfying conclusion.

If anyone wants to write the upcoming chapters, I'm okay with that so long as I'm properly credited. Doing so in a way that I can link your fic on mine or at very least part of the series is preferable. I’ve actually had a problem recently with people stealing my fic and posting it on other sites, so while it shouldn’t need to be said, I’m going to say it: don’t steal my actual writing. The people who did this are getting reported and it sucks when people take work that isn’t theirs. Make your own art.

Thank you for your patience with me and this story.

- serenawitchwriter

Gentle Waves

Chapter by serenawitchwriter

Chapter Summary

Tsuyu, All Might, and Midoriya take a mental health day

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Tsuyu woke with a start, skin itching and heart thundering in her chest. It was a familiar feeling. Unfortunately, it's too familiar. She started breathing deeply to calm down from the rush of adrenaline and fear the dream had given her. She was safe. She was whole. She was alive.

She was lying in her bed in her dorm room in UA. The room was dark and the humidifier made things comfortably warm, but she still felt chilled and disturbed. She needed to get something to drink and to wash her face, she always felt dry when she first woke up even with her room being a relative sauna compared to the rest of the dorms. A bath would be nice, but that could probably wait until morning.

Glancing at her clock, she saw that it was a little after three in the morning. She stretched, the nightmare still lingering at the front of her mind, and put on some slippers so that she could head down to the common room.

It was always strange to wander around the dorms at night. The feeling was quite different from wandering around her home at night. Normally after a particularly bad nightmare she'd glance into her siblings' room and make sure they're all right, but that wasn't an option here. And it'd be creepy if she checked on her friends.

So she just silently walked down to the kitchen. She'd do a headcount once everyone was awake. It might have been a silly habit, but it was a comforting one. Her mom used to do it when they went out when she was little. She'd make them count off so she'd know they were all with her. Tsuyu ended up taking after her mother in a lot of ways.

The frog girl was almost grateful to see Mido-chan already down there. He was often getting hurt in her nightmares. Aizawa, too. She hated to admit it, but the USJ had sunk its claws into her and was a trauma she's been struggling to overcome. Tsuyu understood it abstractly. Recognized she and all her classmates were safe. She'd been through it in the therapy sessions and everything. She knew her thoughts and feelings were rational and a natural reaction to what had happened.

But that didn't mean she'd overcome it. The feelings and fear and memories were written into her, and she knew they'd always be part of her now.

She continued to the kitchen and got her glass of water. She returned to the common room and sat down beside Mido-chan on the couch. He had several notebooks open in front of him. Glancing at the paper showed it was all in code and she didn't much feel like deciphering it so early in the morning, even if Midoriya had given all his friends the key to his. They sat in comfortable silence as midoriya finished whatever complicated train of thought he was focused on. Tsuyu knew that he functioned better when he was allowed to finish whatever he was thinking. He tended to act more distracted when his mumbling was interrupted, probably because he was losing the threads of the ideas he was having. Tsuyu felt it was a shame more people didn't let Mido-chan complete his thoughts. They were always very intelligent.

"Nightmares, again?" Mido-chan finally asked, turning tired eyes towards the frog girl. He had deep bags under his eyes and had been showing strain for a while. While Yaomomo-chan had helped him organize his schedule to be more reasonable and Amajiki-senpai had finally gotten Midoriya to start taking breaks, he still seemed threadbare and stretched thin. Tsuyu often wondered how much the therapy with Hounddog-senpai was helping.

"Yeah," Tsuyu said, holding her cup between her hands. "The USJagain. It was almost like a flesh-eating disease." The memory of Shigaraki's hand touching her face, so close to killing her if not for Aizawa's quirk, had been playing on a loop for too long. It'd been so close. Too close.

Midoriya rubbed his neck where Tsuyu knew Shigaraki had grabbed him at the mall. "Yeah," Mido-chan agreed. "That's one of the worst."

Tsuyu nodded. "What about you, kero?" she asked, ready to move on.

Midoriya went silent for a long moment, contemplative. Tsuyu sipped her water, giving him the time and space to decide what he wanted to say.

"The other me was a villain," he finally said. Tsuyu nodded. "But… he wasn't that different from me…"

Tsuyu frowned, "He seemed pretty different to me."

Midoriya shook his head. "Only one person in the other world noticed I wasn't their Izuku. I'm not a good liar, but everyone was fooled so easily… the only one who did notice… he said…"

Midoriya cut himself off and didn't continue. He was crying. Tsuyu put her arm around his shoulder and let him get it out of his system. Eventually he cried himself out and leaned heavily into her.

"He left me notes," Midoriya gestured at the encoded papers. "The other me thinks I'm gonna do something with them."

"They probably aren't accurate to our world, kero, " Tsuyu pointed out.

"I know," Midoriya agreed, wiping his face, "but I have to read them anyway."

There was a lot he didn't say in that sentence, but Tsuyu didn't press him. She recognized that wasn't going to help so instead she said, "Let's go to the beach."

"What?" Midoriya said, blinking tiredly at her.

“Kero, we need a mental health day,” Tsuyu said decisively. "So let's go to the beach."

"Tsuyu-chan, we can't just take a day off of school," Midoriya protested. "We'll fall behind."

"We can catch up," Tsuyu said, putting a finger to her lip. "Our classmates take very good notes and our teachers will understand."

"You know it's not that simple. I'm already behind because I missed a week with the villains, and I have all my other work and these notes and I don't want to waste anyone's time. Plus we'd need permission first, and it's too cold for the beach. And everyone else in class will worry about where we are--"

"Mido-chan," Tsuyu gently interrupted. "How are you feeling right now?"

He blinked at her, unaware of how dark his eyebags had grown over the past couple of months.

He gestured vaguely with his hands as an answer. "A lot, I guess. But that's normal, isn't it?"

Tsuyu squeezed him gently with the arm that was over his shoulder. "Overwhelmed," she stated, "and stressed and probably upset, kero. That'll make focusing hard, won't it?"

She felt like she was reasoning with her stubborn little brother. That wasn't exactly a bad thing, though thankfully her brother didn't have as much on his plate.

"I've been through worse," Midoriya said, running a hand through his thick curls.

"Midoriya, kero," she said, waiting until he looked at her. "That's not an excuse."

He slumped forward, still looking exhausted. "The beach sounds nice," he said in a hopeless way, like going would be impossible.

"Our other problems will still be here when we get back, but a break could provide perspective, kero," Tsuyu continued to wheddle.

Midoriya continued to pout, tiredly.

"I'm sure All Might would be willing to come with us and act as our guardian while we're out," Tsuyu suggested.

At the mention of All Might, Midoriya brightened. "I suppose I could ask him…" Midoriya said slowly. Tsuyu found his clear love of the hero incredibly endearing. The hero and student made no secret of the fact that they were close and while Tsuyu couldn't confirm a blood relation, it didn't really matter. Love was love.

"I think he'd appreciate you coming to him and the opportunity to spend more time together," Tsuyu said blatantly.

Midoriya blushed at the obvious insinuation. Still, he fidgeted with the pencil he'd been taking notes with. "I suppose…" he said consideringly. "It has been a while… and he does like the beach…"

Tsuyu smiled at him. Midoriya's blush deepened. "We'll ask him at a more reasonable hour. Until then, kero," she gently closed his notebook and took the pencil from his hand. "We should rest while we can. Do you want to go back to your room or to rest here?"

Midoriya fidgeted, glancing around the common room. "You want me to rest here? Just the two of us?"

Tsuyu gave him a blank stare.

"I don't want to make you uncomfortable!"

Tsuyu's stare became blanker.

Midoriya fidgeted some more, cheeks still pink. "I guess here," he finally said bashfully. "I-I don't think I want to be alone right now… but so long as you're comfortable…"

What he was saying deteriorated into incomprehensible muttering. She smiled again and settled more comfortably onto the couch using the remote to turn on a mindless sitcom. She turned the volume down and turned to raise her eyebrows at midoriya, silently asking if he was okay with this.

He met her eyes but quickly glanced away, still a little flustered. But with the lull of the TV, he relaxed rather easily, allowing himself to be distracted by the show. It was a nice, comfortable silence and it wasn't long before they were both drifting off to sleep.

The next morning, a picture of them cuddling had been added to the group chat. Midoriya was a mortified blushing mess, but Tsuyu just smiled and saved it to her phone. She had to push Izuku to ask All Might, and once Izuku stuttered out the request the hero accepted enthusiastically. All Might had barely called Aizawa to mention what they were doing before they got the go-ahead. He seemed to agree that Midoriya was getting too run down. He agreed to let Tsuyu go too without a fight. She suspected it was because he wanted someone responsible to keep an eye on Midoriya.

They spent the morning relaxing and packing a picnic basket. Midoriya spent the entire time anxious and trying to return to work. All Might matched his stubbornness beat for beat and ensured he didn’t bring any work to the beach with them. Tsuyu ensured there were enough snacks in the basket and that she was wearing a warm enough jacket. It was still winter, and her plan to go to the waterfront probably wasn’t the wisest for her. She was already tired. But the beach was one of her favorite places, and she could tell by All Might and Midoriya’s enthusiasm that they loved it too.

It took perhaps longer than it should have for Midoriya to start to relax. He was still tense and clearly distracted but he was smiling more, excited to talk and catch up with All Might.

Perhaps they'd been spending less time together with Midoriya's packed schedule? That would also explain All Might's occasional forlorn looks. Tsuyu was happy she suggested this.

They set out around lunch time, making their way across the city on foot as a light exercise. They went to a beach Tsuyu had never been to before. but she had heard about it. The Dagobah Municipal Beach. It used to be a dump, but some anonymous citizen decided to clean it up. She had a sudden suspicion about who. The next time Midoriya looked at her she smiled extra wide. She really appreciated people who looked after the environment.

The sand was cold and she was tempted to dig into it and bury herself so she could sleep some more, but resisted that instinct because it was probably weird. Midoriya rushed to help All Might set up the blanket and a lawn chair. They had a cute little exchange as Izuku took things from the hero with a smile and All Might smiled proudly back.

She helped where she could but it was colder than she thought out and she was definitely getting sleepy. Most of the normal beach activities weren't available due to the cold. She definitely didn't want to go swimming, and all of them stayed bundled in their jackets. She was starting to wonder if the beach wasn't the best idea, but the crisp sea air was refreshing and Midoriya definitely looked happier than he had been.

"Hey," she suggested something she'd done as a kid for as long as she could remember. "Wanna collect some rocks and arrange them in weird patterns?"

Midoriya blinked at her, then a bright smile burst across his face and it was like the sun coming out. "Sure!"

For the next half hour they searched the beach and made a pile of rocks. All Might watched from the beach towel, a thermos warming his hands.

- They spend some time playing, arranging the rocks, and making a sand castle. Just enjoying the calm atmosphere
- Eventually they sit down to lunch with All Might on the picnic blanket. Everything is peaceful for a time until the conversation turns dark.
- All Might brings up why they needed the mental health day in the first place. Tsuyu explained about her nightmare and Midoriya mentioned his encounter with All For One in the other universe. Not mentioning the offer to become a villain. More implying that

he’s feeling pressure not to become that version of him and to fix the other version's mistakes, even if those mistakes don’t affect this world
- He acknowledges the enormous burden on his shoulders
- Yagi understands and speaks honestly

“The hardest part of being a hero,” Yagi said gently, “is dealing with being helpless.”

Midoriya’s eyes teared up. Tsuyu stared at her feet, a funny feeling in her throat.

“We can’t save everyone. We can’t be everywhere at one. Our choices determine who lives and who dies. And oftentimes, our jobs are to choose the lesser evil. Sometimes… the only choice we have is to do nothing. And that’s the hardest choice to make. To just stand back, to feel like you can do something even when you can’t… it hurts. It’s not fair. And it’s oftentimes more difficult than taking action. At least for the right kind of heroes.”

- both Tsuyu and Midoriya react in their own ways, Midoriya asking for more solutions, almost denying that he can’t save everyone. Saying that he has to save everyone. That’s what it means to be a hero
- All Might says that what it means to be a hero is to try your best. That sometimes the choice is out of your hands.
- Tsuyuu asks what ways they can overcome this issue. This frustration at their own helplessness.
- All Might says to do what you can and to hold those you failed in your heart. To fight on for them another day. Always remember your failures, but remember your victories too.

- Midoriya’s expression turns dark when All Might mentions failures

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“Do… do you ever think I- uh- I seem… villainous?” Midoriya stuttered out suddenly. He looked extremely self-conscious and almost scared of the answer.

Tsuyu stared at him, but decided it was a rather reasonable question given their recent encounter with villain Midoriya. She could tell it was really bothering him so rather than waste time with comforting platitudes, she deeply considered her answer, pressing a finger to her lip.

“You can be very scary at times,” she said honestly. Midoriya cringed. “You’re very powerful, you’re very smart, and you’re very motivated. And unlike most people you don’t seem to be held back by things like pain or fear. Taken altogether, that makes you very dangerous.”

Midoriya hunched more and more into himself as she spoke. He wouldn’t meet her eyes.

“But that doesn’t make you villainous,” she continued. Midoriya’s head whipped back up to look at her with wide, vulnerable eyes. “More than anything, you're kind. I don’t think our character is determined by our traits or our potential for evil. It’s determined by what we actually do.”

She took his hand. He looked down at their connected hands, a blush rising in his cheeks.

“And you’ve done a lot of good, Midoriya. You’ve helped us. You’ve defended us. You’ve saved us. And that’s despite having a lot of bad experiences and trauma to hold you back, kero. I think it’s pretty amazing that you haven’t done worse things.”

“But doesn’t that mean it’s a matter of time? Before I mess up? Before all these bad thoughts explode out of me and I hurt everyone I love?” Midoriya was trembling, tears in his exhausted eyes.

“That depends on you, Mido-chan,” Tsuyu said, squeezing his hand. “You recognize there’s a problem. So you have to try to fix it, kero."

Izuku's eyes shined with tears. "...I don't know how."

He sounded incredibly vulnerable in that moment that Tsuyu couldn't help but hug him. He was warm. It took him a moment to relax into the embrace.

"You just have to ask," she whispered. "You're not alone anymore, Mido-chan. We'll help you as much as you help us."

Midoriya began trembling violently. Tsuyu knew he was sobbing, though somehow he didn't make a sound.

When he pulled back his smile was the most brilliant thing she had ever seen. Gentle and kind and warm and so very genuine. Midoriya had always given his smiles freely, and he meant them too. But something had always been guarded. He was afraid to lean on them, afraid to be let down again.

This smile was vulnerable. Tsuyu couldn't help but reciprocate, smiling back and letting out a pleased croak. She took his hand again.

"Let's go home."

Chapter End Notes

big sister Tsuyu is underutilized and deserves better

Assassin

Chapter by serenawitchwriter

Chapter Summary

Hagakure discovers one of Midoriya's many secret talents

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The training simulation went like this: everyone in class had a beeper with a target's name. Your job is to find your target and hit them with a paintball gun. Once you eliminate your target, their target becomes your target and the game continues until one person remains. You have an assassin after you and you're allowed to eliminate them in self defense, but if you eliminate anyone who isn't your hunter or your target, then you're automatically disqualified for killing a possible civilian. The main objective of the game is to take out as many targets as possible while remaining unseen.

Hagakure was born for this game.

- This one isn't very thought out
- Essentially it would be a series of action scenes where they take out more and more of their classmates
- Hagakure is in fact doing the best
- But Midoriya is proving to be a dark horse in the game
- He and Hagakure end up being the final two
- Izuku ends up deducing where she is and winning
- Hagakure is shocked, she hadn't seen him coming

- She asks him how he did it
- He reveals that he's used to hiding and running from bullies
- Adding a quirk to the mix just makes him faster and better
- Not to mention dismantling quirks is his hobby

- Hagakure leaves respecting him more but also slightly terrified

Chapter End Notes

head empty for this one

Where did you come from?

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Chapter Summary

Kamui Woods feels like someone's following him

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

- This starts before canon. From the early days of Kamui's career, Midoriya has often been in the crowd cheering him on. They're in the same area and since Izuku is always looking for hero fights, the local ones are the ones he sees most.
- It's a very long time before Kamui notices. It initially feels like a corner-of-his-eye thing. He's not really noticing the crowd and he never thinks specifically about the boy with the green hair, but his mind still picks up that he's there.
- The first time he notices Midoriya is on the day of the sludge villain incident, and even then he easily dismisses the quirkless boy who didn't even look in his eyes or defend himself. A reckless kid who thought he could be a hero. They were a dime a dozen, though; you'd think a quirkless kid would know better.

- The moment doesn't fully stick in his head until the Sports Festival. He'd noticed the blond kid All Might saved first. He'd told the blond he could be a hero that day. That he had a fantastic quirk for it and that he'd held up well, and there he was fighting like an animal despite getting first place
- But the green-haired boy was unexpected. He hadn't immediately connected it to the quirkless boy, but the green hair was familiar. It itched mildly at his brain. The boy was really familiar, and just as reckless as the boy he remembered. But it couldn't be the same kid. One was quirkless, this one was explosively powerful.
- Kamui briefly considers offering the boy an internship just to figure out how he knows him, but that seems unfair and the boy's quirk is an obvious liability.

- The next time he spots the green-haired-boy, it's on the news. The Hosu case. Everyone was worried about the Hero Killer. And the speech he gave in the video a civilian captured was intimidating. Kamui has seen the video several times when he finally spots the green hair in the background.
- When he noticed, his heart dropped in a combination of confusion and concern. It really couldn't be the same boy. He was seeing things. The boy was plain-looking. He was

probably just filling in the blanks.
- No matter how many times he rewatched the video, it was the same boy.

- He was called to the mall. A villain had taken a UA student captive but didn't hurt anyone. The boy spent more time speaking to the police and his teachers than any of the heroes on the scene. Kamui spent his shift walking through the mall and thoroughly searching for a villain that was probably long gone.
- Still, it was the same boy. Probably not the quirkless or hero killer kid, it'd have been in the news if a UA student was involved in the Hosu incident. But it was definitely the kid from the Sports Festival. Green hair. Freckles. Short but muscular.
- It was starting to rub him wrong that he kept spotting the kid. Now that he was noticing, it felt like the kid was everywhere.

- Kamui was a few beers in when he went on the hero forums. That's how it usually went. It was always easier to be social when he was tipsy.
- He was not prepared to come across a conspiracy theory about the green-haired-boy.
- He asked, on his unofficial account and his fans flooded him with information.
- He was not the only one who'd noticed the green-haired boy. There were photos, videos, interviews. And in all of them someone had circled the green haired boy in the background. Too many.
- The green-haired boy had been there long before he noticed him

- Kamui maybe has a drunken panic attack because he concludes that he's being stalked.
- He feels embarrassed in the morning, but the suspicion sticks in his mind.

- Later he actually meets Midoriya for real while they're handling the war arc. Too much is going on for him to really focus on his stalker, but he feels slightly relieved.
- Midoriya isn't creeping on him or anything. Midoriya obviously has a whole outside life and is more focused on the mission.
- An outside life that apparently puts him smack in the middle of the chaos and lands him in the hospital after everything is over.
- A hospital that Kamui is also staying in after he got severely burned.

- As Izuku is gearing up to leave and preparing to go on his vigilante journey, he does stop around the hospital to meet and talk to various heroes because that's the kinda guy he is. Both a fanboy and someone who's apologetic for something that's not his fault.
- Kamui isn't quite up to talking due to his burns, and Izuku left to his own devices goes on a spiel and reveals that yes, he remembers meeting Kamui during the sludge

incident, and that it *was* him watching those various fights, and that he knows *WAY MORE* about Kamui than he thought he did.
- Izuku maybe goes on a quirk ramble of suggestions on how to improve his quirk and fighting style and maybe starts listing old fights as citations before going off on small tangents about Kamui's personal life that he really shouldn't know about.

- Izuku ends the convo by thanking Kamui for fighting alongside everyone, telling him he's a real hero and that he's sorry he couldn't stop Shigaraki yet.
- And he asks for an autograph when Kamui is up to writing again.

- Kamui has never been more terrified in his life.

Chapter End Notes

what's this? recent canon influence? it's more likely than you think

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